

Studies in Black and White

JEROME
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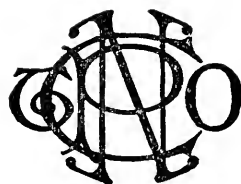
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STUDIES IN BLACK AND WHITE



STUDIES IN BLACK AND WHITE

A novel in which are exemplified the lights and shades in the friendship and trust between Black and White—Master and Slave—in their intercourse with each other in antebellum days.

BY
JEROME BRUCE, M. D.

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PREFACE.

In the first place: In the way of a prologue, I have pandered to those who always read the last chapter first.

In the second place: Surely, surely after forty years we are far enough removed from the times when Sambo began to moult, preparatory to assuming the plumage of Mister McDonyal, Mister John-sing, Mister Calhorn, or whatever happened to strike his newly awakened fancy, for us to be able to write and read dispassionately concerning what people thought, said, and did down in Dixie in those days. If there should be any—on either side—who harbor malice after all these years, let them lay this book down here and now; they are bound for that bourn that burns, and I have no wish to forgather with them. Forty years! Why, that is half the lifetime allotted to man! Let that suffice.

Sanford, Fla.



AS THE STORY RUNS.

Prologue.

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Finessing.

Little Miss Tippers.

An Understanding.

A Wrangle.

A Breakfast Party.

The Fox-Hunt.

Young Mr. Taylor of Virginia.

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That She Had Ever Seen Him.

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The Conjure Doctor.

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Doctor Jack Returns Home.

PROLOGUE

Save the cry, "Whippoorwill! whippoorwill! whippoorwill!" not a sound mars the hush of this mid-summer's midnight. Not a leaf is astir. A full moon looks down on the scene, flooding all with its soft, amber light. The shadows made by the dense foliage of the magnolias lie like black blotches on the snow-white sand. The long, drooping festoons and streamers of gray Spanish moss add to the weirdness of it all. Off to the right of the broad, sandy road runs the beautiful Oconee River; on the left are two large granite gate posts, against one of which leans a man, every outline of whose figure bespeaks ineffable sadness. In front of him and beyond him four tall, white chimneys rise from a mass of tangled weeds and unkept evergreens, like monuments to a departed civilization, which in very deed they are. Flanking the chimneys a dozen or more great, dead oaks stretch up their withered limbs, stark and white, as if in mute appeal to some avenging spirit; ghosts they are of a once splendid grove surrounding a rich Southern home.

The man, the posts, the dead trees, the chimneys, and the waste are all that are left of that once happy, hospitable home—a home of affluence, and of that unostentatious refinement peculiar to that section; a home whose doors were never closed in the face of want, and through which passed the rich and the poor, the high and the low; each and all the recipient of its benign grace.

The figure we see is that of the only remaining heir to this once splendid estate. Four years—four long weary years of war—have dragged by since he set forth, leaving it all charming and beautiful, to-night he returns to find—this.

No supernatural power is necessary to divine the bent of his mind, nor the trend of his thoughts as he stands there. He rebuilds those sacred walls—re-furnishes each well-remembered room. In the spacious hall he rehanges the portraits of a long line of truly noble ancestors. He repeoples the place with the loved ones of yore, recalling his own happy, careless boyhood days there—his father, his mother, his brother, and his old black mammy: all these crowd his memory there to-night. He goes back and repeoples it with former generations. They pass in one unbroken panorama before his vision, beginning their happy young lives under most auspicious conditions, in ease, comfort, and peace. Generation after generation pass in view. The older heads bleaching in life's autumnal sun and dew; their steps grow shorter and slower; their eyes often dimmed by light springing tears; while their hearts grow soft and mellow. Until within four years his life had run parallel with those going before; but those four years and the future—alas! what of them?

He recalls his childish study of the old clock in the hall, with its big brass pendulum swinging back and forth, tick, tick, tick, tick, little dreaming then that it was counting off the sands of his life. It has been many days, ay, months and months, since a smile lighted up his handsome, manly face; but now

the ghost of one flits over it as he recalls a night long years ago, when as a little toddler, unable to sleep, he had fallen to thinking about the old clock down in the hall, and stealing away from his mammy, had slipped out of bed and tiptoed to the head of the grand stairway to see if it were asleep. He remembered that he had made up his mind, if he caught it napping, to wake it up with a "Booh!" but on second thought he had decided that it would be a sorry joke to disturb it. After listening to it tick for some time, he called out to it, "Why don't you stop and rest, old clockie—aren't you tired?" and just then the wheels began to whirl and buzz as he had never before remembered them to have done; and frightened, he had scampered back to his bed, while the old clock tolled twelve.

And so it is at times, little, ludicrous things will obtrude into one's gravest thoughts. Here to-night, with the realization of this utter wreck and ruin rushing fresh upon his mind, this childish fancy comes back to him, and for the moment eases his burden—lightens it just one feather's weight. It was well that it was so; for all this loss—all this devastation—all these idols cast down, broken and burned away, were cares as light as thistle-down compared with the great shame and sorrow that had come into his life, shattering every hope and ambition that had cheered him on, and made life worth the living. The respite is but for a moment, and he is reingulfed in the maelstrom of his woe. Aroused from his reverie, again the bitter recollections of that shame and sorrow mingle with the placid stream of memory, and he starts as if pierced

by a dagger at some vital point. Every muscle becomes taut as steel; slowly his head is drawn back, and his face is upturned toward Heaven: above his head his arms rise tremblingly, his clenched fists relax, and his troubled soul goes out in a piteous wail, "O my God, have mercy, have mercy, and grant that I may not go mad this night!" For some moments he stands in this posture, with head and hands upraised—his parted lips grown dumb by reason of the growing pain at his heart.

On and thus he dreams.

Hours have passed. The moon is fast sinking into the west, and her slanting rays lie across the fair bosom of the sleeping river, like the sheen of a golden tress. It is the ghostly time of night that the Southern darky believes departed spirits return, tripping and shivering to their narrow homes—the hour just before dawn, when the long-eared owl slips by on noiseless wing to his darkened nest.

An unaccountable, uncanny feeling that something awful is impending—he knows not what—creeps over him. He turns and strides out into the middle of the roadway—every faculty on the alert. Who shall say what impels him? He gives a quick start and shudders as he beholds a tall, white figure approaching him from the dense undergrowth. Noiselessly, slowly it advances—first in the shadow, and then in the light a long stride or two and stop: on the white figure comes. Its arms begin to rise and extend toward him. The man who has faced and courted death, ay, prayed for it hundreds of times, trembles in every limb. The cold perspira-

tion starts at every pore; his teeth chatter; and every hair on his head stands on end. The snapping of a twig breaks the spell, and the old soldier—the old veteran—turns and flees.

“O Jack, it is I, it is I!” in a stage whisper, only lends additional speed to his already flying feet. Just as he is passing a sharp turn in the road, a shot rings out on the still night air; and the tall, white figure falls with a heart-rending shriek in the middle of the road. The echo rings back from the hills beyond the river, sharp and clear; and again all is still as death—not a sound—save the cry, “Whippoorwill! whippoorwill! whippoorwill! whippoorwill!”

CHAPTER I

Three months ago, on their golden-wedding day, the elder Jack De Mar laid his wife to rest in the old family burial-ground. He had never recovered from the shock of it. Day by day he had grown weaker—no pain, no illness—only weaker and weaker he grew. One quiet evening, bidding his sons good-night, he retired and slept—and sleeps on forever—God rest him.

The family carriage, drawn by four fine gray horses, came slowly in between the large granite gate posts; on under the broad spreading oaks; on under the archway at the east end of the mansion, stopping at the carriage entrance. Old Uncle Lot, with bared head, came forward and opened the carriage door, and stood bowed while his young masters alighted and passed indoors, with a "thank you," to their favorite old darky. The door was scarcely closed upon them when the old man broke down and cried like a child. The driver busied himself with the lines, and spoke sharply to the front off horse, though he was standing perfectly still. Little Jim, the gate-boy, black as Erebus, dug his great toe into the gravel road, while he wiped the tears from his eyes with the sleeve of his coat.

Jack De Mar is dead. His two sons have just returned from the simple interment. Jack De Mar dead and buried? No, no, no! They have buried his mortal remains; but they have not buried Jack De Mar—he still lives! He lives in the hearts of a

large family connection; he lives in the hearts of countless friends; he lives in the hearts of his hundreds of slaves. He lives to-day in the history of three wars; but the old soldier has heard his last taps on earth; has heard his first reveille, and answered his first roll-call on the other side of the river. No braver man ever sprang to arms in answer to the long roll on earth; no truer man ever knocked at Heaven's gate!

The De Mars were a remarkable family in many respects. Their ancestors were Huguenots, who coming to this country long before the Revolutionary war settled in Carolina. Two brothers they were—Jack and Hal. Under another name they live in song and story. Their adventures among the Indians in those days adorn the pages of colonial history, and have furnished a theme for the glowing fancy of one of America's most charming writers.

Ever since those first days there has been a Jack and Hal De Mar—sometimes several of each at the same time. They have always been wealthy, and have always married among themselves. And, strange to say, against an almost universally accepted theory, it can be truthfully asserted there has not been a single instance among them showing any degeneracy, either in mind or body. On the contrary, they have been far above the average in both respects. The women were most charmingly beautiful and healthy, and the men perfect specimens of robust manhood.

It was believed by some that a desire to keep

their wealth within their own family had much to do with their intermarrying. Whether this were true or not, they would have had to travel far and wide to find more attractive personages than those of their own blood.

The impression must not be left that these were proud, bigoted people. That would be an egregious error; they were brave and chivalrous, and as old Lot said of them, "Dey is sometimes mighty hasty when deir young hot blood am up—on occasion."

It was not their ambition to be known as members of the old Courtly School, whose principal characteristics were found in exceedingly profound salaams and profuse greetings. Nothing could have been more simple than their manners always. So assured was their position in all companies that they were never afraid of compromising it by being considerate of the feelings and comfort of others, were they great or small, rich or poor; nor was their abnegation of self, disgusting demagoguery.

Does the recent observer think my characters overdrawn? Then let him go into that neighborhood even to-day. While he will find few, if any, who are in position to dispense the old-time hospitality in the old-time way, yet he will still perceive the influence of it pervading every nook and corner; descending into the negro cabins, even there he will find their inmates kind, respectful, and polite.

CHAPTER II

A rose that had been planted between the freshly made graves of Jack De Mar and his wife had grown to be quite a bush, and was now in full bloom. That healer of all griefs had been kind to the two young men who had been left alone of this family; and they now laugh and enjoy life, as they had at one time felt they should never do again. Good, dear, kind, old Time!

"Now, Coots, what have you been up to? I know from the expression of your face that you have been up to some mischief. You old hypocrite! You come climbing up here, looking as innocent as a lamb. Ah! there comes Marm Tilly with a switch. I knew it, I knew it! Was it jam, Marm Tilly, or was it cheese this time?"

"Cream, Marse Jack, cream! She spiled er whole dish uv cream that I'd whipped fur de curd and de strawberries."

"Well, you must let her off this time. You know she has just lost her baby—don't forget that, Marm Tilly."

"Marse Jack, you'd spile anything in dis worl', from a pesky cat up"—a parting shot, as she shook her switch at Coots, who had now crawled up on Doctor Jack's shoulder, and was blinking her yellow eyes at the old darky, while she licked a drop of remaining cream from her whiskers.

"Hal, you should have seen Coots bring her dead

baby in this morning and, placing it before me, look up at me in the most piteous way possible to imagine, with an expression that said, 'Can't you do something for my baby? Look at it now, what's the matter with it?'"

"Poor old Coots," said Hal, "you had to comfort yourself with some cream, didn't you? All right, old girl; Jack and I will live to have cream another day. We all must have our troubles, Coots; but we are not always soothed with cream."

"What have you there, Robert?" asked Doctor Jack of a servant who had just entered the room.

"Er note from Magnolia, sar. Sandy is ter wait for er answer."

Doctor Jack took the note, and as he read his face grew a shade sober.

"Nothing unpleasant, brother mine?"

"Oh, no—just a note from cousin, Hal, asking us to come over to-morrow evening to Magnolia. Cousin Fan is home, and there is to be a meeting of the clan. I will go and answer it."

As he rose to do so, the note fluttered to the floor at Hal's feet. Sitting there idle, he noticed it, and, picking it up, saw that Jack had not read the entire contents to him. The omission was, "Unless you find it convenient to call earlier."

When Doctor Jack returned and gave the answer to the servant, his brother said,

"You will ride over this afternoon, will you not?"

"No, we will keep to the invitation," was his answer.

This Cousin Fan referred to was Miss Fannie De Mar, the handsomest of the De Mars even, and the

wealthiest, Doctor Jack coming next in the latter respect.

An old maiden aunt, for whom this young lady had been named, had arranged from the day of the child's christening that she was to marry Jack, at that time a child of four years. This aunt had a very large estate which she bequeathed to Jack and this little namesake of hers. Now the old lady had died long years ago. The negroes had increased wonderfully; the plantations had greatly enhanced in value, and the bank account had kept pace with the other assets, until the young lady was the richest single woman in the South. She had been three years at school in Philadelphia, and was now home, a "finished" young lady. This arrangement of the old aunt was no secret, and of course Hal knew all about it, and was surprised that his brother should take things so quietly. It was supposed by all the connection that as soon as the young lady returned there would be the grandest wedding in the history of the State.

"No," continued Doctor Jack, "I am not going to Magnolia until we all meet there to-morrow."

"Why, what is the matter? I did not think that you could be so cold-blooded," said his brother.

"I am sorry, so sorry," continued Doctor Jack, not heeding his brother's remark, "to disappoint everybody; but, Hal, I must out with it—I cannot marry Cousin Fan."

"Oh bother! You have not seen her as a grown-up young lady. If she is not a most charming young woman, she will have belied the promise of the girl most woefully."

"She can not have improved," said Doctor Jack, "she was already the prettiest girl I have ever seen; but I have made up my mind that I will never marry any one, and that settles it."

"Wait, old fellow, just wait until you have seen her. You may change your mind; it is all bosh about the ladies alone having that prerogative."

"All right," said Doctor Jack, "we will wait and see. Come, let's have a canter down to the landing and meet the boat."

Ordering their horses, they went scurrying down the road, laughing and talking as merrily as if the world held no care for either of them.

The afternoon following found them riding toward Magnolia. On the way, joining first one and then another party bound for the same destination in tallyhos, carriages, and tandems; others like themselves on horseback. They made quite a cavalcade as they wended their way through the tall magnolias—from which the place took its name. Nearing the house, the drivers touched up their horses and dashed around the circle, reining in just in front of the house, a large, comfortable, home-looking building, with tall fluted columns supporting the broad verandas, extending around three sides of the main building. To the right and left were colonnades extending to apartments known as offices, which served as quarters for the young men when there was an overflow of company. The arrival of the guests was a signal for cheering and the waving of hats and handkerchiefs to as fair a vision as ever blessed mortal eyes.

Standing alone on the broad veranda, just under

some drooping branches of a Virginia creeper, stood Miss De Mar,—a perfect dream of radiant beauty,—tall and queenly, dressed in some soft white material that set off her face and form to perfection; the brown of her hair matching the brown of her eyes, as they gleamed and flashed with the pleasure of seeing all these dearly loved faces of her kinspeople once more. The jolly greeting they gave her added a shade to the pink of her cheeks as she stood there, extending her arms as if to embrace the whole party at one time.

Doctor Jack was the first to spring from his horse and hasten to greet her, as every one expected that he would. Her face flared and flamed, and doubtless her heart beat quicker when she saw this tall, handsome young man rushing toward her. The outstretched arms fell to her sides, however, before he reached her; a circumstance that he did not heed, if indeed he noticed it; for, taking her in his arms, he gave her a hearty, warm kiss.

“Ah! dear old Jack,” thought his brother, “I told you so! I told you to wait. It would take an ironclad resolution to stand before that battery of beauty. What a splendid match they will make!” In the next moment Miss Fannie De Mar was surrounded, embraced, and kissed by a score of kinsfolk scarcely less attractive than herself.

It goes without saying that this was a gay, happy occasion. After an early tea the company was scattered all over the place; every one enjoying himself in such manner as was most agreeable. The young ladies had captured Miss Fannie and had carried her off, after the manner of young ladies, in such

cases made and provided. The young men had strolled down to the kennel to have a look at the dogs, except Doctor Jack, who had remained with the older gentlemen on the veranda. There was Mr. Hal De Mar, mine host; there was his cousin Jack—"Chatham Jack" he was called, after the old homestead where he lived, and in contradistinction to the other Jack De Mars; and there were also two other cousins, brothers they were, George and William; all men about the same age, each furnishing his quota of sons and daughters, who made up the party on the present occasion.

Doctor Jack touched Chatham Jack on the arm and said that he wished to consult him on some matters of business. They walked down the drive, and when out of earshot Doctor Jack said,

"Cousin, I want to ask a favor."

"Why, certainly, my boy. You need never prefix a request to me in any such fashion as that. Bless my life! Certainly, certainly, I'll do anything for you; what is it?"

"You know," began Doctor Jack, "we will have a dance this evening, and I want you to claim the first number with Cousin Fan."

"Bless my life! I can't think of doing anything of the kind—not but that I would give the best dog in my pack to do so, aside from obliging you; but I am not going to have all these young bucks down on me—I was young myself once upon a time. Excuse me, what joke are you trying to get off on me, you sly dog! Everybody gives away to you to-night at least. That is what we are here for, I take

it. We supposed that the announcement would be made to-night."

"No, cousin, I am not jesting. For reasons that I cannot give now, I do not wish to open the dance, though of course I know that it will be expected of me. I cannot ask any of the young men to do so, for obvious reasons; but you, being the dean of the family, can very well claim the privilege, and I shall take it as an especial kindness if you will do so."

"Bless my life! The idea that any one, and more especially you, should not want to dance with Fannie, first, last, and all the time, stumps me flat. Why, boy, she is the prettiest young woman I have ever laid eyes on; she is a perfect marvel of beauty. I couldn't take my tea for looking at her. Certainly, certainly, I'll dance with her as often as you want me to. But say, Jack, you must see old Fiddler Dick, and tell him not to play anything very fast for the first number; and you might tell him not to make it too long; you see I am not as young and spry as I used to be."

"Thank you so much. It is very kind of you," said the Doctor.

"Not at all, not at all, don't mention it. I'll dance with Fan any time that you wish me to. Bless my life!"

Having arranged this, they returned to the veranda and joined the others. Very soon fresh arrivals from neighboring families were announced, and among them were Colonel Andrews and his daughters; the latter would have ranked as beauties anywhere except among the De Mars.

The "fiddlers" began tuning their instruments in

the spacious ball-room in the west wing of the building. Chatham Jack pulled up his collar, adjusted his necktie, and rising, shook down his trousers' legs, and sauntered into the ball-room, where several couples were promenading; but he did not find Miss Fannie, nor Doctor Jack in the company. It again dawned on him that there might be some joke in store for him and he was in the act of passing out of the room, when he came face to face with his fair cousin alone; who, if it had been possible, was looking more beautiful than ever in her dainty ball costume. The vague suspicion of a practical joke was at once dissipated.

"You are not going out, Cousin Jack. You must dance to-night in honor of my return. You don't know how happy I am to be back among my loved ones again. Won't you dance? Do hunt up a partner at once."

"Bless my life! That was just what I was doing, hunting up a partner; I was waiting and hunting for you."

"Indeed; were you really?"

"I never spoke the truth patter, I assure you."

There was the slightest hesitation on her part. Doctor Jack was approaching them, and she sought in his face for some hint to indicate that he would claim the first number; but just then some one else stopped him. Then she said,

"Certainly, cousin, I will give you this dance."

Doctor Jack let her see that he had heard the engagement, and turning to Miss Andrews, who was standing near, asked her for a partner. So Miss De

Mar was left under the impression that he had intended dancing with her.

Some of the younger men found that Chatham Jack had carried off the prize, and slipped a dollar into Fiddler Dick's hand, and told him to give them a lively waltz, instead of a cotillon as had been arranged. Few people are above a liberal bribe, and Fiddler Dick made no pretense of being better than his neighbors. So it came about that instead of the staid cotillon, he struck up the gayer measure, and away went the dancers. Chatham Jack started off famously for a man of his age and size, but very soon it was evident that he was fast becoming winded. It was not long before the old gentleman began casting about in his mind for a plausible excuse to drop out. Should he feign a coughing fit? Just as they were passing the door a little woman, rushing in, threw her arms around Miss De Mar, and brought them to a standstill so suddenly that the old gentleman came near losing his balance. No apology was necessary to him, however. There was a general exclamation,

"Here is Little Miss Tippers!" and all crowded around her, shaking hands and saying how glad they were to see her.

CHAPTER III

Who was this Little Miss Tippers? That would have been a puzzling question, even to those who knew and loved her best. No one ever knew where she came from or to whom she belonged. She had never vouchsafed this information; and small and poor as she was, no one asked; every one respected her reticence. She herself was a living, breathing exemplification of discreetness. Her tongue rarely took the form of an interrogation mark. Was it this that opened every door and every heart to her? To describe her faithfully was scarcely less difficult than to tell whence she came. Small almost to petiteness, with black hair and gray eyes, she would not have been considered pretty in any company probably, yet she had not a single bad feature. She had good hands and feet; the latter was not a matter of faith, for she wore her skirts just to the tops of her well-fitting boots, which made her look still the more girlish. Her age might be placed anywhere between twenty and forty; sometimes she looked the former, at others the latter, and at still other times she looked anywhere between the two. Every one liked her; every one trusted her and confided in her implicitly. Old and young went to her with their troubles, and were comforted. She had a way all her own of doing this. She had come into the neighborhood, we may say, gradually. She found herself welcomed wherever she went; and was soon sought after, as she became better known.

She had been among the De Mars now for years. On one occasion she had casually remarked that she wished she had a little home of her own, where she could go when she needed rest; adding, "You know every one likes to be alone occasionally." I forget just at this moment at which one of the De Mars she made this remark; but this is immaterial. About three months after it was made she was at Chatham Jack's home, and Mrs. De Mar said to her,

"Would you mind going driving with me this morning?"

"I will be greatly pleased to do so," she answered.

"It sounds a little inhospitable, I know, but you might take your things with you, as you may not come back immediately."

The little woman, for just a moment, looked surprised. It was the first time she had ever been invited to leave a place. However, she soon regained her composure; and when the carriage was announced she went off as cheerfully as if it were the very thing she most desired—dear, good little woman! The driver had received his orders beforehand, and drove down the river road. Within half an hour they arrived at a brand new little cottage, nestling in a lovely grove on the top of a knoll, commanding an extended view of the river and the surrounding country. It was in about the center of the De Mar neighborhood.

"What a lovely little place! I do not remember to have seen it before," said Little Miss Tippers.

"We will go in," said Mrs. De Mar. Within everything was in keeping with the outside appear-

ance, thoroughly furnished, all new and clean. An old mamma came forward to meet them.

"Why, Marm Milly, you here?" said the little woman. "We expected to see strangers."

"Yes, Missis," the old mamma said with a curtsey, "I's here, an' me an' you an' Frank is gwine ter live here—shore!"

Little Miss 'Tippers turned to Mrs. De Mar with a most puzzled expression upon her face.

"Yes, Marm Milly is right. This is your home. to come to whenever you are tired and wish to be alone. In the left-hand drawer of that desk you will find a deed-of-gift of this place and for Marm Milly and Frank, from your friends who have learned to love you so well. We are not shelving you, remember; we will expect you at our homes just the same; this is your resting place when you get tired of us—no, I did not mean that, dear, we know that you do not really get tired of us; but when you wish to be alone you can come here, and find old Marm Milly waiting for you, with everything snug and nice."

The little woman could utter never a word; but throwing her arms around the neck of her friend, gave vent to her feelings, for which there were no words coined yet, in tears, in which performance she was joined by Mrs. De Mar and Marm Milly. Frank cried, too, because—because he could not help it, that was all. Having their cry out, they looked at each other through their tears, and began laughing, as is the way of womankind.

The little cottage was inspected throughout. There was a cozy little sitting-room with its ap-

propriate furnishings, a case containing a few choice books, and a few pretty pictures hung on the walls. Off that was her own chamber, dainty as a dainty little lady could wish, with its dressing-room annexed. Over against that was a company room. Then there came the dining-room and pantry; each supplied with everything that heart could wish. In the dining-room Mrs. De Mar went to the sideboard, and pulling out a drawer produced the silver.

"Doctor Jack contributed this, dear, and the naughty boy had it engraved 'Little Miss Tippers'; you won't mind?"

"Not at all—of course not—how could I? I *am* Little Miss Tippers to my friends. The dear, good, generous boy!"

In short, everything was as conveniently arranged and as generously supplied as loving hearts could prompt and willing hands devise. When the inspection was completed, Little Miss Tippers turned to Mrs. De Mar, and taking both of her hands in hers looked up into her face and said,

"My good, dear friend—my good, dear friends, I can not say how grateful I am for this thoughtful kindness." Then her heart overflowed in tears—warm, sweet, happy tears they were—with no bitter salt in them. Her friend leaned over and kissed them away, saying never a word.

So it came about that Little Miss Tippers became a fixture in the De Mar neighborhood, still going from house to house—wherever there was a heart to comfort or a pain to alleviate, there Little Miss Tippers was to be found, doing good.

On this occasion, the return of Miss Fannie De

Mar. she had heard of it, and hastened to see her. They were the staunchest of friends. While so unlike in many respects, so differently brought up, so differently surrounded, and all that these things mean, yet they were so much alike in those elements of character which were the very best and truest of all that either possessed.

CHAPTER IV

Having explained Little Miss Tippers as far as I am able to do, we will return to the dance which her entrance had interrupted. Every one was expecting a denouement with Doctor Jack and Miss De Mar as principals, and felt that Chatham Jack had been *de trop* in claiming the first dance.

Before the second number was called, a messenger came for Doctor Jack to visit the sick child of one of the poorer neighbors. It was known that he always responded to such calls more promptly than any other, as people of that class are sensitive in the extreme to any appearance of neglect. On this occasion it was observed that he responded with more than usual alacrity. Strange! was it not? Doubtless, Miss De Mar was not less quick than others. However, no one made any sign; everything went forward as though nothing had occurred to disturb the even tenor of the occasion. Doctor Jack was a gentleman—let it rest at that.

The call was not a distant one; he might return—but return he did not. On the dance went, with its usual accompaniment of laughter and fun, until after a late supper the company broke up; and all returned to their respective homes, save Little Miss Tippers.

When the company had gone the family sat resting and chatting for some time. Finally these yielded to the kindly influence of the drowsy god, and retired to their rooms; Little Miss Tippers to

a small room adjoining that of Miss De Mar, which was always kept in readiness for her occupation—"Little Miss Tipplers's room." The house soon became quiet, with all the lights out.

We will claim the dreamer's privilege and follow Miss De Mar to her chamber. She had hastily removed her ball costume and donned a light, cool wrapper. Relieved of its fastenings, her abundant brown hair hung down her back in luxuriant waves and ripples enchanting to behold. She went to the window casement, threw open the shutters, and drew back the filmy lace curtains. Kneeling down with her elbows on the cushioned seat, supporting her chin with her two fair hands, she gazed out into the night. What were that beautiful maiden's thoughts as she knelt there? Ah! there are some things too sacred for the dreamer to divulge to common mortals. While she gazed at the stars her face grew paler, and a sigh lifted somewhat the weight of a care.

The house had long since grown still and dark, when there came at the door a peculiar little tap that the young lady knew well of yore. It was as the tap of an angel. She stirred not; she made no sign; she only waited. Gently the door opened, and a little white figure stole in. A gentle little arm stole around her waist. Turning, Miss De Mar wound her arms about the slender little figure kneeling at her side; her head sinking on the little shoulder, she gave loose reins to an emotion that she would have thrust back in any other presence, though her heart lay bleeding and crushed in the

effort. Neither spoke a word; only a gentle, loving little hand—oh! so true and kind—patted a fair, white shoulder, with a touch that an angel might have coveted. There was balm and comfort in each little pat, falling with a gentleness and rhythm born of nothing less tender than a Saviour's pity.

With arms still intertwined they faced the window again and gazed long and in silence at the stars out in the night. Was there a suspicion of a sigh, there came the gentle little pat, and it was hushed.

Then came a voice soft and low, as if breathed by some sweet spirit of the night,

"How quiet and peaceful the stars look to-night. Quiet and peaceful they are; because they go on and on in the course laid out for them—around and around the universe, never complaining, never worrying for fear of getting lost; never dreaming that they will not be valued at their worth, never wishing for some bright particular star for a companion; forgetting that that star has its own course to run. They all go on patiently—faithfully running their course. On and on they go, at their marvelous speed, singing the song of the stars." After a moment of silence, "I believe in the God of the stars." Clear and true came the response,

"I too believe in the God of the stars."

They turned and kissed each other. Then bowing their heads they repeated the "Our Father" and arose from their knees. Who shall doubt that the God of the stars let fall the dew of his blessing upon their pure hearts?

"Now let's say good-night. I am comforted and strengthened," said Miss De Mar.

"Lie down, dear, and let me soothe you to sleep," said the little one.

"Nay, I am not so selfish; you need rest quite as much as I. Go to your room now—God bless you," and she kissed her little friend again and again as she led her to the door. In a few moments they were sleeping as sweetly as if no pain had ever left a footprint upon a trusting heart.

Doctor Jack had remained longer at the bedside of the sick child than was necessary, in all probability; and when he left it at last, he went directly home and found his brother waiting for him.

"How did you leave your little patient?"

"Relieved," was the sententious reply.

They sat in silence for some time. Hal put his hand on his brother's shoulder—a hand as gentle as a woman's, yet with a firmness that meant and gave strength—while he said,

"Brother, I know that it pains you; I know that you would not give pain to another for any slight reason; more especially to one that you love." For a moment no answer came back; only the Doctor's hand covered that of his brother, with a gentle pressure.

"I cannot play double," said Doctor Jack. "It would have been more than cruel to have encouraged a thought or feeling that would have ripened only bitter fruit."

"Would it not be as well, if not better, to wait, and not rush matters just now?"

"No, Hal, that is a mistake that I will not make. What can never be, should be never begun. I wish to be understood at once; it will cost less pain now than later on." Here he took a turn around the room. Coming back and resuming his chair, he continued, "It was almost unpardonable to place two people in such an embarrassing position. Dear Aunt Fannie—little did she dream of what misery might spring from her very kind intentions. I am so glad that I never touched a cent of the money. Just as soon as I can do so without giving unnecessary pain, I will give Cousin Fan my share of the estate."

"What a lovely young woman she is!" mused Hal.

"Yes, indeed; she could not be more so; nor do I believe that there is one more lovable in the world; but if I do not love her as a man should love the woman he marries, ought I to marry her? That is why I say that I shall never marry. I never expect to find a more lovely and lovable woman than she is. The woman that I marry must be indispensable to my being. Now suppose I go on and encourage Aunt Fannie's arrangement, and when it is too late find out that it was all a mistake? No, I will go over to-morrow and have an understanding at once. After to-morrow the house will be full of company."

"You may be correct, brother. I have no doubt but that you will do the right thing, in the right way. I am sure that I should blunder most miserably."

Doctor Jack leaned over and kissed his brother's forehead, and said,

"Good-night."

Thus they parted; and the subject was never again mentioned between them but once afterward, and then in connection with a most terrible tragedy that changed everything for the brothers.

Immediately after dinner the next day, Doctor Jack ordered his horse and rode over to Magnolia. One would have been blind not to discover that there was restraint all round when he met his cousin's family. It was the more noticeable from the fact that such a thing was so foreign to these people, whose hospitality knew no limit except the impossible.

Ever heretofore, these young people had called each other Jack and Fan. Now he addressed her as Cousin Fannie; noticing the change she called him Cousin Jack; and when she did, their eyes met, and they understood. Strangely enough, the embarrassment melted away and they laughed and talked of indifferent subjects with perfect freedom. At the first decided pause in the conversation, he asked if she had been down to the Cove since her return.

"No, you must remember that I have not been home two days yet."

"Shall we walk down and have a look at the place? I have not been there for ages."

"Yes, if you wish to go." Was there a suspicion of ice in that? Doctor Jack thought so; and the character of the pain it produced was beyond his power of analysis.

Securing their hats, they strolled leisurely along,

saying not a great deal in the mean time. Having reached the Cove, and passed in through the vine-clad entrance, they occupied a rustic seat beneath the dome made by the long branches of the magnificent old live oaks. They remained silent for some moments, scanning the beauties surrounding them. Then without any preliminaries, he turned and took her hand in his, saying,

"Cousin Fannie, I have always tried to be straightforward and honest in everything, and with everybody. I have always thought that if we are true to ourselves—in the best sense of the term—we are apt to be true to others. If there is anything more despicable than being placed in a false position, it is placing some one else in that plight. Cousin dear, you and I are grown-up people now, and ought to be able to take a broad and honest view of matters pertaining to our future. It would be the saddest of mistakes if we should allow any sentimentality or mistaken idea of duty to influence our course, or hurry us into a dilemma from which we could not extricate ourselves. Our dear good aunt never made a greater mistake than when she put us in this embarrassing position. You must know, Fan, that I love you most devotedly, as my dear, sweet cousin; and I hope that I am not too egotistical when I say, I am quite sure that you entertain the same feeling for me."

Up to this point she had not interrupted him, nor did she do so now, only she gave his hand, holding her own, a firm, steady pressure, which spoke a silent language, that had no word for de-

ceit in its vocabulary. And he was glad. He continued by saying,

"True love cannot be cut and dried, nor slated according to program. Divest it of spontaneity and you will have stripped it of that element which makes it akin to Heaven; you will have simply the song of a caged bird. Am I giving my sweet cousin pain?"

"Not at all, Cousin Jack. Have you not during your life come upon some entirely new scene, and been unable to divest yourself of the feeling that at some time you had been there before—that it was perfectly familiar to you?"

"Yes, often."

"It seems to me," she continued, "just now that what you are saying to me has at some time, in some way, presented itself to my mind—all unconsciously, but certainly most distinctly. I have not been able and, to be truthful, have not tried to analyze my feelings in this matter. I would consider myself hopelessly stupid if I did not recognize and appreciate your many sterling qualities—your warm, true, generous heart, and your calm, well-balanced mind—now, now, now, my dear cousin, I have listened to what you had to say without interrupting you; and now you must listen to me, and let me have my say. Surely you would not suspect me, on any occasion, much less on this, of silly flattery. I recognize these qualities in you, and I am proud of them. I am proud of my kinsman; and I love my Cousin Jack with my whole heart—yet—yet are we indispensable to each other? Let's make no mistake, cousin. As you have said, people cannot

fall in love by schedule. But I shall be more pained than I can say, if our dear old auntie's mistaken kindness raises an embarrassing barrier between us. On my part, it shall not."

And with a sudden impulse she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him over and over again, just as she had done when they were children together. Disengaging her arms, she took his face between her two soft, shapely hands, and looking him squarely in the eyes, said,

"Now, Cousin Jack, we understand each other, I think thoroughly; let it stand at that. Do not shun me—that would hurt—come and go as you have always done. We will be good, loving cousins—always."

Raising her eyes to an opening in the dome overhead, where the blue skies looked through, she said in a low, reverential tone,

"I believe in the God of the stars."

Drawing her head down on his shoulder, he kissed her fair, white forehead as he wound his strong arms about her, saying,

"I believe in the God of this woman."

Without another word they arose and went back to the house, holding each other's hand—as they had done so often in childhood.

CHAPTER V

The summer sped as summers will. There was the usual routine of family gatherings—picnics—barbecues—fishing parties—birthday parties—anniversaries and fun and happiness and peace.

(Aside: "The good old times before the war" was no fable, I can tell you; joke about it as we may. But let's not talk about it now.)

And so time wore on. While the families were sure that Jack and Fan had come to some understanding, they were at a loss to divine what that understanding might be. No one ever broached the subject to either of them. They met constantly, laughing and dancing, riding and driving together, and were evidently fond of each other's company.

"Give them time, give them time," said Chatham Jack to his wife. "Jack cannot be blind to such beauty and loveliness. Bless my life, dearie, she is almost as pretty as you used to be; not but that you are as pretty as ever, sweet." And he arose and went around the table and kissed her—just as he used to do—don't you know?

To look at her now, as she sat there, with a loving husband's kiss warm upon her lips, one could well imagine that the old lady with sixty-odd light-sitting winters upon her gray hair, and with a summer's love of more than half that age in her heart, had been a beauty, too, in her teens.

"Doctor Jack, with his fine looks and admirable qualities, and his large estates, is a De Mar, just

that far," said Mrs. De Mar. "But that he should violate every tradition of the family by going into a profession—when no De Mar has ever been known to be anything but a planter—prepares me for any freak that he may develop. I shall not be surprised if he does not marry Fan at all."

"You mean at last, dear, do you not?" said he laughing.

"There is no use mincing words about it," was her emphatic reply.

"Come, come, dearie, you must not be too hard on the boy for going into a profession. Times are changing; not everybody can be planters any more than everybody can be De Mars. It's true, physic is a nasty thing; but the profession is a noble one, next to the church, next to the church. Bless my life! He will settle down after a while, and give up the whole thing,"—after a dubious pause,—“and marry Fan.”

"I have no doubt but that you are correct, Jack;" and after a more dubious pause, "but I don't believe a word of it."

"That's funny—bless my life!" said he.

"It may be funny to you, but will it be funny for Fannie?" she retorted, missing the point.

Just at this juncture the argument was brought to an abrupt close by the door flying open; and in rushed Miss Fannie De Mar and Doctor Jack, followed by half a dozen other young folk, their cheeks aglow and their eyes asparkle with the pleasure born of a brisk canter in the bright, crisp morning air.

"Hello! hello; bless my life!" exclaimed Chat-

ham Jack. "Hold on, girls, hold on; come one at a time. Don't kiss an old chap so fast that he cannot tell which is which—there! that is better."

Everybody talked at once, as fast as ever they could, for the space of five minutes; when, as the old gentleman would have said, it began to unravel, and out of the snarl he picked up the thread of the conversation.

There was to be a meeting of the clan to arrange for a big fox-hunt that had been booked for the first cold weather.

"We must meet to-morrow," said a half-dozen voices at once.

"At old Sandowns," said Doctor Jack.

"No, right here we meet," said Chatham Jack.

"No, no," said Dell, the bright, auburn-haired daughter of George De Mar, "Daddy said I must be sure and arrange it for the Oaks, and he will never trust me again if I fail. Surely, surely these good people will not place a poor girl in that position."

"Now look here, everybody," said Dick, the half-grown son of William De Mar, "Dad said the meeting was to be at the Hollow, of course; and you know when he says anything, he means it. He never promised me a thrashing in my life that I did not get it; and he has ordered all the turkeys on the place killed and ever so many lambs, and in fact everything in sight. They are all killed now; so that settles it—see? Come on everybody, and let's warn in the others. Remember, Cousin Jack, the Hollow to-morrow."

"Bless my life!" said Chatham Jack, "that boy

jumps at conclusions like—like—like a woman. We will draw lots to see where it will be; that will be fair all around.”

“Well,” said Dick, “the blood of all those turkeys and things be upon your heads if the Hollow does not win!”

“Not so fast,” said Doctor Jack, “I’m running this thing. I spoke first. There will be no drawing of lots; and as for Dick, he is simply romancing. I was over at the Hollow only the day before yesterday, and I saw never a turkey nor the shadow of a turkey; and for that lamb business, that is the baldest gammon. How could they have lambs with those sheep-killing dogs around? Besides, Sandowns has not been warmed up for ages. Sandowns is the place. I have spoken.” Giving the table a sound thump with his fist, that made everything on it dance, he puffed out his cheeks in a most ludicrous way; and thrusting his hands under his coat skirts, with his head thrown back, strutted across the room in high play.

“Bless my life!” said Chatham Jack, “if it comes to that, I for one surrender.” All the others sank into chairs, closed their eyes, and let their heads fall over in a most helpless fashion.

Dropping the tragic, Doctor Jack picked up his riding-whip and, waving it over their heads, cried,

“Awake, awake, arise! to horse, ye hosts!” and rushed out of the room, followed by the jolly, laughing mob. Mounting their horses, away they scampered at a wild, mad pace.

“Bless my life!” said Chatham Jack, as he stood on the veranda, watching them go, “bless my life! what a fine thing it is to be young!”

CHAPTER VI

Sandowns was about to take on its old-time life once more, for the first time since Doctor Jack had become the head of the house. At these family gatherings there had never been any formality; everybody was at home.

After Doctor Jack had separated from the young people at Mr. Hal De Mar's gate, the others, Dick at the head, decided to drop in on him the next morning for breakfast, knowing of course that he would not be expecting them. At first it was decided to meet at some common point and go *en masse*; but later it was thought best to go one and two at a time, and keep it up. Young Dick was delighted with the idea, and spent the remainder of the evening drumming up recruits.

At an early hour the next morning, Doctor Jack was standing in the yard, giving directions to some servants, when Miss Fannie De Mar and Dick came dashing up the drive.

"Hello, Cousin Jack," said Dick, "here we are! You did not specify any hour, so we thought that we would be in time. I never like to be late. Your invitation included breakfast, did it not? The ride has given me a famous appetite, and as cousin Fan has talked about nothing but broiled chickens and mutton chops, hot rolls and fresh butter, since we started, I take it that she, too, is hungry."

"I am delighted to see you both. Come right in. I would have been glad at any time to have seen

you; but I am especially so, Cousin Fan, this morning. You know Marm Tilly has never provided a spread for the clan with no one to overlook things for her. When we shall have had breakfast, which will be ready in a few minutes, I will be so much obliged if you will take the trouble to look in for a little while and see that everything is going on all right. Come into the hall; there is some fire there. The mornings are getting quite chilly. Take those horses, Mike, and you Jim, run around and tell Marm Tilly that Miss De Mar and Marse Dick are here. You will excuse my bachelor orders, cousin?"

"Oh, certainly," said Dick, with a broad smile on his face.

Scarcely had they seated themselves around the spacious fireplace in the hall, before there was the clatter of horses' feet on the driveway.

"Help! within there!" came a cheery voice from without.

Doctor Jack recognized the voice of his cousin Alfred, and hurried out just in time to see him assisting Miss Andrews from her horse.

"This is a nice reception to give your invited guests! No one to meet us; not even a boy to take the horses."

"That is really too bad; but here am I, and there comes the boy. I am so glad to see you, Miss Andrews; this is kind of you—I am delighted. Come right in. This is really jolly. Cousin Fan and Dick have just come over, and now we will have a real nice little breakfast party."

"You are quite sure," said Miss Andrews, "that we will not inconvenience you?"

"I am more than sure—I am certain. Do you expect Sandowns to lose its reputation under my care?"

While Doctor Jack was out, Miss De Mar remarked to Dick that she feared that it was altogether too bad to play this joke on Jack.

"Rest your conscience, cousin dear," said Dick, "serves him just right for being so biggity yesterday. Have you forgotten that he actually questioned my veracity? I wish the whole lot would come, and keep coming." And Dick had his wish. Ones and twos kept dropping in until at least twenty couples had come to breakfast.

Doctor Jack, of course, soon caught on to the joke, and asked his cousin Fannie to help him receive. They took their stands on the veranda. The position, she thought, was rather conspicuous under the circumstances; but she had been regretting the part she had taken in coming and was willing to sacrifice her feelings to save him any embarrassment. Between the arrivals she remarked,

"I am quite sure that this is too bad of us, cousin Jack; Dick is responsible for it."

"Then the young rascal has advanced himself greatly in my estimation. I would not have missed it for anything." When there were no more arrivals, they returned to their company within, Doctor Jack asking Dick if everybody had come.

"Not at all—not by a long shot! This is only the advance guard, old fellow. I wish they would come on; I am getting terribly lonesome, and I am as hungry as I am lonesome," and he went to the door and peered down the road wistfully.

While the Doctor took in the joke, not so old Marm Tilly—first surprised, then worried, finally dismayed. More help was called, and everything was removed from the cozy breakfast-room to the more spacious dining-room; where she spread a table that would have accommodated at least fifty guests.

“Do not worry, Marm Tilly,” said Miss De Mar, who had gone out to see if there was anything that she could suggest. “Just give us whatever is most convenient. It is all a frolic, you know. Ham and eggs and plenty of strong coffee is enough.”

“Bless yer, honey, old Marm Tilly ain’t gwine ter be run over by jes’ er little company uv you youngsters. I’s got six niggers in de kitchen br’ilin’ chickens, an’ ham an’ aigs, an’ er cookin’ hot cakes an’ waffles. You jes’ run back an’ keep ’em lively fur a little while, an’ Robert will come an’ ’nounce breakfast ’fore yer know it.”

In a very short time, sure enough, Robert made his appearance, and the company swarmed out to breakfast in a jolly good humor, and was confronted with a meal of which no housekeeper could have been ashamed. The early ride had given every one a country appetite, and the meal was enjoyed to the full. Doctor Jack had the best of the joke, thanks to the plucky and resourceful tact of Marm Tilly.

Later, the older members of the families arrived, and the proposed fox-hunt was discussed and re-discussed, until it was decided that a challenge should be sent to Major Haralson of Virginia, who had often visited them and hunted with them, and

had always bragged on the superior breed of his hounds—"They are the very best in the world."

When dinner was announced it proved a more formal affair, and its appointments and supplies were matters of surprise to those who had raided the pantry at an unexpected hour only that morning.

Having seen the last of the company off late in the afternoon, Doctor Jack turned to go inside, and was confronted by Marm Tilly standing in the middle of the walk, arms akimbo, evidently waiting for him.

"'Fore de Lawd, Marse Jack," she began, "don't do dat no more. I's disgraced de whole De Mar family for shore. De idee uv er De Mar not bein' ready ter feed de whole county on de spot, is er disgrace. Sech er thing never happen' 'fore."

"Why, Marm Tilly, I was just going around to congratulate you. You did famously. Everything went off as smooth as if you had had a week's notice. No one could have done any better under the circumstances."

"That's whut upsot me, de circu'stances. Hit all might er bin mighty smooth in der big house; but I tells yer hit wuzent smooth in der kitchen, by er jug full. When Miss Fannie an' Marse Dick cum, I sed ter Mag, 'Mag, you run right out an' snatch up er couple more br'ilers right quick, 'ca'ze Marse Jack will want Miss Fannie, erspecially, to have er nice breakfast.' An' she ain't hardly more'n got them two br'ilers picked, when lo an' behol' hyere comes more comp'ny; den some more br'ilers wuz

cotch up, an' so hit went on, till las' Mag say, 'Der ain't no more br'ilers lef'. Hit looks like white folks thinks er nigger can reach up in er tree anywhurs an' yank down er br'iler ready picked.' An' I dess slapped dat nigger in de mouf, an' tole her ter shet up an' not be er talkin' erbout white folks erroun' me. But I tells yer, Marse Jack, spring chickens is monstrous sca'ce in de fall uv de year—pow'ful sca'ce."

Doctor Jack permitted the old darky to have her say. She had nursed him, and was a privileged character. She had switched him many times.

"I'll try and remember about the spring chickens in the fall of the year next time, Marm Tilly," said the Doctor.

"I wish yer would, 'ca'ze when spring chickens is sca'ce hit's mighty frustratin'. Hit's like axin' fur cowcubers at Christmas."

"I'm sorry you have been frustrated, Marm Tilly," assuming an air of deep contrition.

"Hit ain't gwine ter happen no more, Marse Jack; don't yer worry erbout hit. Dis nigger will scratch her fingers off fust; don't yer worry, chile."

Doctor Jack knew from long experience that when she spoke in that way to him there was no root of bitterness in the warm, true heart beating beneath the bosom that had pillowed his head so often—so often!

CHAPTER VII

On the top of this knoll the first frost of the season had bedecked the browning grass and high-waving sedge with myriads of gleaming ice-crystals, kissed into iridescence by the morning sun's first rays. For miles around the eye could sweep over thousands of acres of waste land—hill and dale, brook and brake; here and there a glimpse of the river nestling in the arms of the blue hills in the distance, looking for all the world like bits of plate glass dropped here and there on the landscape picture.

Far and near this particular knoll was known as 'The Meet.' This great expanse of waste land was given over to the fox and the huntsman. No shooting was allowed, nor burning of the sedge fields, to disturb the fox's cover. No hut nor cabin was permitted, because every squatter would have his breed of curs and mongrels to break into the chase at some critical moment and spoil the race.

Ah, what a royal morning that was for sport! Perfect! It was cold, clear, and still—cold enough to make the blood tingle along the veins, not to hurt; clear, that the light and shadings might have a free hand, dappling and dimpling the field of view; still, that the scent might lie long and true, and that the music of the hounds might rise and fall—and echo—and echo—and echo.

From the east comes the sound of clattering horses' feet on the hard ground. A whip dashes up

at a swinging gallop, followed by a pack of thirty dogs. As he mounts the crest of a ridge, he winds his short horn; and lo! the answering blast of two other packs approaching from different directions. On they come—the three whips, each followed by his pack of hounds, swinging around hill tops; down into hollows; up again into view—on they come! The morning is reverberant with the noise they make, the echoes pulsing into every nook and corner—every brier and brake alive with the clatter of it.

As they approach The Meet, they locate each other and swerve off to prevent the packs from becoming mixed, in which event a free-fight would have been inevitable. Having come to a halt, each whip busied himself trying to keep his dogs together; but in spite of their best efforts, the most refractory ones broke away, when a general melee began. It required the combined efforts of the three whips, and considerable time, to get them separated and order restored.

This was scarcely accomplished when there dawned upon the scene Major Haralson of Virginia, come to accept the challenge from the De Mars, for a fox-hunt—a chubby, red-faced man, quick and peppery in every motion and fibre. He was nattily dressed, and mounted upon a small Arab horse,—a beauty of his kind,—a light roan, with limbs like a deer; mane and tail long and black; a splendid neck surmounted by a small, well-formed head, his eyes large and the color of amber, beaming with intelligence. He was as spirited as his rider, and as gentle as my lady.

Reining in his horse, the Major whipped out his watch: "Fifteen minutes ahead of time." Fifteen minutes is a long time for an impatient, peppery little man to wait, and perforce he must be doing something.

"Ah! there, boys," sang out the Major, "unchain the dogs, and let them get accustomed to one another."

The whip nearest him raised his hat and said,

"Marse Haralson, don't yer spect dey will git ter fight'n?"

"Not a bit of it—not a bit of it! We can manage them easily. Turn them loose."

Of course there was no appeal from the Major's order, and the dogs were liberated. The way they scampered was wonderful to behold, until they became thoroughly mixed up, when there ensued the liveliest dog fight in history—barking, growling, snapping and snarling; making a noise that only seventy or eighty hounds could.

"Why don't you stop that fighting?" thundered the Major to the whips.

Already the boys were down among the dogs, yelling, kicking, and plying their whips right and left. The Major watched them for a few moments, before he tumbled off his horse and rushed into the fray, only to be tripped up and rolled over by the fighting dogs; and tumbled over afresh every time he got on his feet, and eventually had to be pulled out by his legs and set up, by two of the whips, minus his hat, and with his coat split up the back to his collar, spitting sand freely—which latter fact doubtless prevented an explosion of remarks that

would have been too florid for ears reverent. If he was red in the face before, he was redder now. If he was peppery before, he was pepper and ginger now. In the mean time, one of the whips was chasing a young dog that had secured the Major's hat, and was running down the hill, tossing and catching it as he went. This side chase had the effect of diverting the attention of the other dogs, and away they scampered, joining in the frolic with the Major's hat, until there was no hat left to speak of.

Just at this juncture there was the clatter of horses' feet mingling with shouts of greetings. When the Major turned around his eyes rested on a picture of unsurpassed beauty; a group of as handsome men and women as the world could produce—mounted upon splendid, spirited horses; the whole silhouetted against the deep blue western sky—the De Mars. Back of this group were a half-dozen mounted servants in waiting.

"Good-morning, Major," called Mr. Hal De Mar. "How do you do? We are delighted to see you. We feared that you were not coming, as you did not arrive last night."

"I am very sorry; but one of my dogs went astray yesterday, and we did not get nearer than Colonel Andrews's," and there followed an all-round hand-shaking and expressions of pleasure.

The Major's plight was soon discovered. The Major, who was always so immaculately dressed and groomed, stood hatless, his coat split up the back, his hair all disheveled and full of sand, the bow of his cravat well up under his left ear; of all which the Major was innocently unconscious.

"Why, Major, what has happened to you?" asked Chatham Jack.

"Not anything," said the Major, as he buttoned his coat over his crumpled shirt front, thereby widening the rent in the back of that unfortunate garment.

"I have adopted the fad of going bareheaded. The idea is, to keep the feet warm and the head cool. Let me commend it to you, gentlemen."

"But your coat is torn, Major," said Doctor Jack.

"Is it, indeed? How funny! The dogs got into a fight, and we had a tussle with them," said the Major; and with his hands thrust down deep into his pockets and with a most quizzical expression on his jovial face, said,

"We must have had—'a parrot and monkey time' of it," whereupon there was a roar of laughter, which good breeding and good nature had suppressed.

In an instant Doctor Jack had dismounted; and taking a pocket case, produced a needle and thread with which he soon had the Major's coat repaired.

"Thank you, Doctor, ever so much," said the Major; "your surgery is painless and bloodless. I will take pleasure in commending you."

"By the by," said the Doctor, "where is your friend? You promised us one."

"Where is that scapegoat?" he said, scanning the country. "He loitered to talk with Andrews's daughter, and said he would overtake me. I warn you, young ladies, he is a most susceptible young man—is Taylor. I will not call him 'a rising young lawyer,' for honesty demands that we call him 'a

briefless barrister.' However, we hope that he will rise sooner or later. A capital young man, a capital young man—sharp in the better sense of that term—bright and brave. Ah, yonder he comes now."

And there hove in sight a handsome young man, wearing a neat-fitting hunting-suit, and mounted on a dashing, spirited horse, perfectly groomed and with trappings in good taste.

"This way, Taylor. Hurry up, and make your apologies for keeping the company waiting."

Introductions all around followed. Miss Fannie De Mar was the last one to whom he was presented; and the young man lingered by her side. But he soon noticed that while she carried on a running badinage,—twitting him for having torn himself away from the Misses Andrews so quickly,—her eyes constantly wandered in the direction of the handsome young man to whom he had been introduced as Doctor Jack De Mar.

"So," mused Mr. Taylor, "the land lies in that direction, does it? That is the young gentleman that I will have to deal with—and watch—will I not?" The young lawyer was not at all disposed to disparage himself; and looked forward with pleasure, rather, to the oncoming tilt.

The Major had sung this young lady's praise in such high notes as to induce the young lawyer to throw over his Virginia flames and come to Carolina. If he found the one-half true of her, he was going in to win. He saw her there that morning in all the glory of young womanhood—a perfect beauty in perfect health, and evidently wealthy. He

looked around at the entire party as a fit setting to such a picture.

Just then the horns sounded, and the dogs were loosed and put on the move toward the cover. Down the hill the bright cavalcade followed the hounds. They had not far to go before a strike was made, and made by the Major's little Blue Bess.

"There!" shouted the Major, all excitement and exultation, "I would have bet a fortune that Blue Bess would have the best nose in the whole lot. The best nose in the whole world, De Mar; I must send you some of the stock. Give her a little time," shouted the Major to the whips, "and she will show you the way the fox has gone." Very soon, sure enough, she broke away; one and another followed, but in rather a half-hearted way.

"See," said the Major, "your dogs have not the nose."

"I am inclined to think that your dogs have the wrong end of the trail, Major," said Mr. De Mar.

"Never, never!" exclaimed the peppery little Major. On and on the hunters followed the hounds.

"The wrong end of the trail," said young Hal De Mar to Mr. Taylor, who chanced to be near him.

"Speak it in whispers," said the young man. "For the world, do not let the Major hear you. It would break his heart to have his favorite dog make a blunder right at the start."

"Stop, everybody!" cried Chatham Jack, "they are going toward that fallen tree. If they go there, we will know at once whether we are on the right end or not."

"How is that?" asked Mr. Taylor of Miss De Mar.

"You can't be an old hunter," said she.

"No, I have not hunted much;" and with a grimace added, "I may not be as old as I ought to be, I fear."

"Then I will explain: If hunting for birds, a fox comes to a fallen tree, he invariably goes around the stump and mounts the body and slips along to the top or boughs, where the birds would be roosting. He would never go into the top first, for fear of disturbing his prey."

"I see; I see. Thank you. You seem so well posted in fox-craft, may I not be allowed to attach myself to you during the chase, so that you can give me points? I certainly would be greatly obliged, and edified as well."

"Oh, you would learn ever so much more from my father, or the Major, in fact, from any of the gentlemen. I just happen to know a few things that I have picked up casually in the hunt. There! the dogs have gone into the top of the tree—that settles it."

Everything was in a hubbub in an instant. The horns were sounded, and the whips put spurs to their horses, calling their dogs, and retracing their steps to the starting point. The dash enlivened everything. There was some fine horsemanship displayed, not by the gentlemen only, for the ladies sat their horses with an ease and grace that can be acquired only on bareback colts and ponies in childhood, before one learns fear.

The Major, disgusted with the false start, rather

slunk behind, in so far as his plucky little Arab would permit him. But when the hounds had returned to the point where they started, it was Blue Bess that first took up the right end of the trail. At her first note the Major put spurs to his horse, and went tearing through the line, yelling encouragement to his dogs. As the trail warmed, the entire pack joined in; and the whole countryside rang and rang with the music they made—the echo resounding from the hills, and dying away in the distance. It was not long before the fox was jumped, and away went the hounds and the whips.

It was not admissible to yell when the fox was fresh, he might strike off for miles and miles in a straight course. Otherwise, he would circle and double around the neighborhood of his hiding place, thus enabling the older huntsmen to see more of the sport. The youngsters, of course, risking their necks at the ditches and hedges rushed after the hounds. The young ladies were in the forefront of it all, sitting their horses as easily as if they were cantering down a meadow path looking for daisies.

Mr. Taylor's horse positively refusing to take the first ditch, he was forced to go with the older gentlemen. Very soon the chase passed near them, and Doctor Jack dropped out and joined them and insisted on Mr. Taylor taking his horse and following the young people who were having such fine sport. "This is exceedingly kind of you, Doctor," he said as he mounted Zeppo. He was soon up with the hounds, taking the gullies with the best of them, the pleasure of it quickly obliterating the chagrin he

had experienced on finding himself handicapped with a balking horse.

On and on they sped, their cheeks flushing, and their eyes sparkling with the fun of it. Up hill and down hill they went. Ah! what sport it was. The music of the hounds—the ringing, merry laughter—the roar and the mad rush of it all!

“Bless my life!” exclaimed Chatham Jack, as they swept by him. No one hesitated for an instant at any hazard he met.

Mr. Taylor caught his breath when he saw Miss De Mar break for a gully at least ten feet wide and as many deep. Would she make it? Would she make it? Miss De Mar had thrown herself forward on Doe’s neck, and she, too, held her breath as they flew. No one had ever taken this gully at this point before. Little Doe, gathering her strength, backed her slender ears and went flying across the chasm.

“By George! They have made it,” shouted Mr. Taylor, who was following close.

The others, knowing the ground, had guided their horses somewhat higher up, where the gully was not so wide, nor deep. Fain would Mr. Taylor have checked Zeppo; but he was accustomed to following Doe; and when he drew the lines, Zeppo took this as his cue to follow now. And follow he did—his nose extended straight ahead—his nostrils flaring red and wide—his eyes blazing and flashing. Mr. Taylor felt every muscle quivering beneath him when the noble steed shot forward, as if thrown by a catapult; and Zeppo landed good three feet beyond the brink—safe.

At the end of the chase, Mr. Taylor was accorded

the pleasure of “tailing the fox” before the other gentlemen had arrived.

The whips coupled up their dogs, and the party adjourned to the home of Mr. Hal De Mar—The Magnolias.

CHAPTER VIII

After a substantial luncheon the day was spent by the older men in resting, and discussing the respective merits of this and that particular breed of dogs; while the younger members of the party, very naturally, drifted into the drawing and music-rooms, discussing those airy nothings which insignificant within themselves, yet afford the close observer a favorable opportunity for studying the caliber and tastes of those participating. The young lawyer's training fitted him well for such an analysis; of which, you may be sure, he availed himself on this occasion.

While Miss Fannie De Mar did not talk a great deal, she was a good listener, with that show of interest which is so highly appreciated by those—who like to hear themselves talk. When she did join in the conversation, her remarks were straight to the point, and gave evidence of a well-balanced mind, thoroughly cultivated. Her criticisms, when she did indulge in them, were just, but merciful—full of sympathy and of the kindest feeling. What she said on any subject was worthy of being carried home and digested. There was a delightful sincerity in her words and manner which gained one's confidence at once. Her laughter, though hearty and catching, was low and sweet. All this, and doubtless much more, Mr. Taylor observed and noted; and it wound a cord around his heart—with what result we shall see later.

It is a quality of human nature to want what we have not, and to desire above everything else that which we cannot have. So it came about that when Mr. Taylor saw that he was not making any headway in ingratiating himself into the good graces of Miss De Mar he became more determined than ever to win her. While it was doubtless true that he was first attracted by her great beauty, and not less by her great wealth, he very soon learned to prize her for her own charming personality.

The hunt was kept up for several days, the evenings being taken up by impromptu dances at one or another of the De Mar houses. When the time came for Major Haralson's return home the unexpected announcement was made that Mr. Taylor had made up his mind to remain in Carolina, and was inclined to make Sherwood, the county-seat, his home, and practice his profession there. No one but the Major, however, gave expression to that surprise. The De Mars would do everything in their power to make it pleasant for him, and to further his professional ambition. To his surprise, no one was readier than Doctor Jack to give expression to those intentions, and evidently with perfect sincerity. The hospitality of Sandowns was placed at his disposal. He had a standing invitation from Doctor Jack and his brother Hal.

After spending a number of days in company with the Doctor, he was more at sea than ever. That the Doctor admired his pretty cousin went without saying; but that he was infatuated with her was not at all apparent. In fact, Mr. Taylor had not been able to detect the slightest indication

of a warmer feeling; and he spent no little thought in trying to fathom the case. He would have stated it somewhat in this way: On the one hand, given a young lady of matchless beauty, highly educated, a most charming personage, with ample means in her own right, to say nothing of her future prospects from her father's large estate; and, to say the least, prejudiced in a certain young man's favor. On the other hand, the certain young man, handsome, rich, kind, attentive, and certainly fond, but with the fondness of a brother for a favorite sister—nothing more. Who could solve it? Certainly not Mr. Taylor.

What Mr. Taylor learned about these people came from close observation and acute reasoning, from this to that. He had not been unwarrantably inquisitive. Mr. Taylor was a gentleman—a Virginia gentleman.

"I shall be very much disappointed if I do not make the Doctor show his hand," mused the young lawyer. "Greek meets Greek."

From thence on, Mr. Taylor danced assiduous attendance on Miss De Mar on any and all occasions; but with results that were only puzzling. The effect on Doctor De Mar was nil; and as for the young lady, nil would have been almost hope; for she avoided him whenever it was possible for her to do so, short of rudeness. In an open field, with youth, culture, a prepossessing face and figure, and the prestige of an F. F. V., Mr. Taylor was not disposed to despair of the final result. He had been accustomed rather to be sought after by mothers with marriageable daughters. He had moved in

good society, had been educated in the University of Virginia, had graduated from Harvard Law School, had spent some years abroad as an attache to one of our Ministers at an important Court, and had improved his opportunities. He was well endowed with fine conversational powers, and could make himself very agreeable and entertaining on occasion. Now the very best that he could command was brought forth and furbished up, and placed to the fore.

CHAPTER IX

It was on a Saturday. Mr. Taylor was spending the day at The Magnolias. He had established himself at Sherwood ostensibly to practice his profession; but, in fact, to inaugurate his campaign in a more important case than any matter of law that was likely to come to him for many years; for this involved a most charming personage in Miss De Mar, and lands and slaves, the possession of which would insure comfort and ease for the remainder of his life.

After luncheon, Miss De Mar, her father, and Mr. Taylor were sitting on the veranda, enjoying the breeze that came up over the lawn and pasture from the river. The day was charming and invited outdoor exercise.

"Miss De Mar, you have promised to show me the Cove. On former occasions it has been too wet under foot. It must be at its best this beautiful afternoon; there has been no rain for days."

"Certainly, and we are fortunate in having father with us. He knows every nook and corner, and is most fortunate in selecting the best points of view," said the young lady.

Mr. Taylor could not repress a look of disappointment. It was not so much the beauties of the Cove that was the attraction, as the opportunity for being alone with Miss De Mar, that had suggested the idea.

"It is the most tropical place in the State," said Mr. De Mar, "and you must see it."

The trio passed down and out at the east gate, and sauntered through the tall magnolias and broad-spreading live oaks. They had nearly reached the entrance to the Cove, when the plantation bell sounded.

"That is for me," said Mr. De Mar; "I had forgotten that this is ration day. I told Gabe that I wanted to inspect the last lot of bacon before it was issued to the hands, and he is ringing for me. I am very sorry."

"Well, we can come again," said Miss De Mar, "it will keep, you know, Mr. Taylor."

"We are so near, Miss De Mar, you might give me a bird's-eye view of the Cove; and we will attempt a more thorough inspection when your father can come with us."

"Yes, daughter, as you are here, you might show him the nearby walks, and next week we will have some friends in who will join us in a picnic. A day is not too much to give to it."

It was the young lady's turn to be annoyed; and it is to be feared that she was not entirely successful in concealing her irritation. To be entirely truthful, she did not wish to be left alone with Mr. Taylor; and short of being rude, she really would have liked him to have an intimation of that fact. Whether he made that discovery or not, he insisted that they should have just a glimpse of the place as they were so near. There was nothing else to do but to comply with his request. The two went on, while the father retraced his steps—never dreaming.

They soon came to the arched opening that had

been cut through the dense wall of vines and briers, running up and entwining among the cypress trees, that formed a perfect wall around the Cove. This skirting wall was at least twenty feet through, and was composed of an extravagant luxuriance of climbers, in endless variety.

Passing within, one was given the impression of an immense amphitheater, so dense were the overhanging boughs of the trees, whose great trunks were as so many columns supporting the dome. There was an endless variety of evergreens, many indigeneous as well as many imported ones from distant climes. While it had the appearance of being well kept, there was no especial design in its laying out, the walks and all lending themselves to the natural conformation of the ground and the positions of the trees. Rustic seats were everywhere. Mr. Taylor had never seen anything comparable to this spot; and was silent when first he beheld its wondrous beauty. They stood in silence for some moments.

"Words utterly fail me," said Mr. Taylor at last; "shall we sit here for a while?"

"There goes that bell again," said he, as its tones rang out once more. "It makes me shudder; it has such a peculiar tone. Where could I have heard it before? It has such a weird pitch. I trust that it is not ringing for us?"

"No," said Miss De Mar, laughing, "it is for the negroes to draw their week's rations."

"Ah, that is a relief. That bell has a peculiar tone. It is as though I had heard it in some far away, troubled dream. Now I have it—Les Hu-

guenots!—Les Huguenots! the bell of Saint Germain, whose tolling was to be the sign for the terrible massacre. The peculiarity of tone was that it had the pitch of low F. Your bell is the same.”

“I remember,” said she, “the bell where Raoul begs Valentine to escape with him; but when he hears the bell, he tears himself away from her and leaps over the balcony.”

“I should want the bell changed,” said Mr. Taylor. “It would make my flesh creep every time I heard it.”

“I had not noticed it; but I fear that I shall in the future associate it with that opera, and especially with the tragic part of it.”

“By the by,” said Mr. Taylor, “I believe that your family descended from the Huguenots; some one told me so.”

“Yes, though I know not that descend is the word; we are Huguenots.”

Mr. Taylor, remembering that the family had constantly intermarried, changed the subject by asking,

“Are you fond of the opera, Miss De Mar?”

“Yes,” she answered, “but I cannot say that I am especially pleased with Meyerbeer’s.”

“Whom do you like best as a composer?”

“Oh, I am sure I do not know; I am not capable of judging. While I have a passion for music, I am no musician.”

“How can you say that, when you play and sing so well?”

“It is one thing to have a certain number of pieces drilled into you, or acquired by long and patient

practice; and quite another to be born a musician. Do you not agree with me?"

"Yes, with your proposition, but not with its application."

"I belong to the former class, nevertheless. I am passionately fond of music; but I suspect that my preference for this or that opera depends more upon the performers, or how the music is rendered, than upon any especial merit in its composition, or whether it is German, French, or Italian."

"Auger's *La Muette de Portici*, critics say, is a composition of the three," remarked Mr. Taylor.

"I have never heard that opera," said the young lady.

Mr. Taylor here gave a description of it, and in several places sang parts of it, and sang them well. He had a fine voice, and it was difficult to accept his statement that it had not been cultivated. Notably his rendition of Masaniello's famous barcarolle, *Amis la Matinee est belle*, was capital. Equally well he sang, "Descend, oh, balmy sleep, friend of the unhappy." His description was graphic and highly entertaining. At its conclusion, observing Miss De Mar's rapt attention, he flattered himself that he had made a favorable impression, and was on the point of making an advance in his own interest; intuitively the young lady read his intentions and hastily arose, saying,

"Your recitation has been so entertaining, we have prolonged our stay beyond what was intended." And without giving him time to interfere, she quickly preceded him into the open.

On returning to the house they found the family

sitting on the veranda; and with them was Doctor Jack, who had called during their absence.

After the usual greetings, the Doctor asked,

"Did you find the Cove up to your expectations, Mr. Taylor?"

"Far beyond them—I can assure you, beyond the description, which I had thought to be something of an exaggeration. It is the most enchanting spot I have ever beheld. I am exceedingly anxious to explore it in its entirety."

"Did you go through it this evening?" asked the Doctor.

"Mr. Taylor has seen nothing but the entrance to the Cove," said Miss De Mar, her face flushing somewhat; "we made no pretense of going through it. We had taken the first seat we came to, when the ringing of the plantation bell reminded Mr. Taylor of the bell of Saint Germain, in Les Huguenots, which brought up the subject of operas; and he was kind enough to give me something of a libretto of *La Muette de Portici*, as a specimen of a composite of German, French, and Italian styles. You remember, Jack, your telling me of having heard it in Berlin."

This was the first time that Mr. Taylor had heard her address him as Jack, and he thought, "Oh! but they are cousins; besides, they have grown up together from childhood."

"Yes," said Doctor Jack, "I was greatly pleased with the music of it. I was not sufficiently familiar with the language to follow the text well; but the music I thought very fine."

"I have discovered that Mr. Taylor has a fine

voice, as well," said Miss De Mar. "He sang several scores for me."

"That discovery," said Mrs. De Mar, "should repay you for the walk; and I hope that Mr. Taylor will be kind enough to let us share the pleasure."

"It may sound a little ungallant for me to say that I fear Miss De Mar is an over-lenient critic. If I had a good voice—which I have not—it has never been cultivated and she has raised expectations that will be doomed to disappointment."

"Oh, you can't expect to escape us in that way," said the Doctor. "Miss De Mar is a capital judge of a voice; and she is not given to flattery, as you will doubtless discover."

Mr. Taylor, being constantly on the lookout for anything that might throw light upon the relations existing between Doctor Jack and his fair cousin, weighed every word, look, or intonation of voice that passed; and wondered if the last sentence of the Doctor was something of an innuendo or not. Later, Mrs. De Mar asked Mr. Taylor to favor them with some music, making his own selections.

Being quick to see how he might be advantaged, and thinking to make such selections as would require some practice, and thus throw them together more intimately than would otherwise be the case, he said,

"If Miss De Mar will play my accompaniments—I do not play."

A number of pieces were selected, and her accompaniments were faultless. All were delighted with Mr. Taylor's voice, which sustained Miss De Mar's judgment. But while there was no occasion

for practice, Mr. Taylor was too much a man of the world not to appreciate the advantage his voice would be to him in this case.

As he rode home that night he could but entertain a feeling of satisfaction with himself; and looked forward with bright anticipation to the next Wednesday, which had been fixed for the picnic. Yet this feeling was not entirely unmixed with some apprehension.

CHAPTER X

When the Wednesday, the day set apart for the picnic, came, nothing could have been lovelier for an outing. It was cool in the Cove in summer, and it was warm in winter, making it an ideal place the year round.

On this occasion the company began assembling early. Hampers and all the appurtenances of a picnic were much in evidence. A number of well-trained servants were moving about in their snow-white aprons, attending to everything with a dignity all their own. As they arrived the company sauntered leisurely to the Cove, which was a short quarter of a mile from "the big house," as the negroes were wont to call the family residence.

If Mr. Taylor was at a loss to find words to express his admiration for the Cove on a former occasion, he found it yet more difficult to give utterance to his impression on this, as he stood at the entrance and gazed at the scene before him. No apparent effort had been made at decorating this lovely spot; but here and there shawls and wraps of various colors and shades hung, as if by chance, against the solid green and brown of brush and vine. Children had established little booths in nooks and corners, constructed of fancy-colored cloths, whilst they themselves ran and scampered in and out, to their hearts' content. Carpets and fancy rugs were dropped and spread here and there. Was it chance that grouped the ladies who were dressed in colors,

in such a way as to make them harmonize to the best effect? The whole was a picture that rested the eye and the soul.

As to the score or more of grown-up young people—I am not equal to it. You should have been there to see them for yourself. The majority were De Mars, which leaves nothing more to be said; only that the others were sons and daughters of their neighbors—the whole making an exceptionally fine display of the better sort of the *genus homo*. Some were standing about in groups; some were sitting on the rustic seats; and still others were strolling in and out from parts of the Cove, invisible from where Mr. Taylor and Mr. Hal De Mar stood.

They passed on through this amphitheater, known as the reception-room, threading narrow galleries into one and another large openings, each with its own characteristic attractions. Through one flowed a stream of limpid water, abounding in fish, which supplied an important part of the menu.

Finally they passed through a long tortuous gallery into a comparatively small opening, dark and gloomy in the extreme; in fact, upon entering it it was difficult to distinguish anything clearly. The party sat down, and one by one the weird things were discernible and took unto themselves forms. There were great swaths of Spanish moss in wreaths and long waving streamers, looking like spooks. Then the bodies of the trees came out of the gloom looking strangely white; ferns and mosses were everywhere. There was a dark, forbidding pool of water on the other side, where frogs croaked or chattered according to their kind.

"This," said Miss De Mar, "is called the Chamber of Despair. It ends everything—at least, as far as our exploration is concerned. There is a tradition of a beautiful Indian maiden who came here to destroy herself for an unrequited love of a 'pale face.' Since when, it is said, her spirit returns here on the occasion of every full moon; and that at that time there springs up at midnight a strange flower from the center of the pool, which she plucks and bears away upon her bosom."

"And the story goes on," said young Hal De Mar, "that when she clears the Cove she halts and begins chanting an Indian love-song; and there comes a 'pale face' on a snow-white charger, thundering through the woods. As he rushes by he leans over and clasps the young maiden up in his arms and sweeps on. He does not pause; he has no time, for he is being pursued by a band of Kiawahs."

"Hal does not like to tell the finale," said Dick De Mar. "The old chief storms on and regains his daughter, and brings her back again, fainting, across his pony's withers. He takes her down into Hoodoo swamp and binds her with miles and miles of web to a cypress tree, and leaves her there."

"Anyway," said Dell De Mar, a bright little girl in her early teens, "Old Marm Mandy told me that a little green spider comes out of the heart of the strange flower which she has hid in the bosom of her dress, and begins to eat and eat the web; and before the moon fulls again she is free," and the little miss tossed her long hair in defiance. "Uncle Lot says Old Spoony will catch that old chief some

of these days, and then the Indian maiden will not be brought back any more."

On the return, when they arrived at the stream, they were provided with tackle, and began landing fish with the best of them. Servants came and took the fish and prepared them by thrusting them into green-corn husks, and then placing them in the hot ashes, roasted them. Dinner was served in an adjoining alcove, which was handsomely arranged. The menu and its enjoyment will be left to the imagination of the reader. You can't draw on it too liberally: there need be no fear that your draft will not be honored—there!

After dinner the company broke away in squads. Mr. Taylor joined Miss Fannie De Mar, and proposed a stroll back down the creek. Not seeing how she could excuse herself without giving offense, she consented. On reaching the stream they seated themselves on a rustic bench. After a moment's silence he said,

"Miss De Mar, the few weeks I have spent in Carolina, have been the most pleasant of my life,"—a pause. "I feel that I shall never want to live anywhere else, for I should not find the same attractions in any other place. I want to ask you, if I may come often to see *you*?"

Miss De Mar could but notice the emphasis on the *you*; but she ignored it, saying,

"Our home has been open to you, to come and go at your will. My father has done and will do everything in his power to make it pleasant for you. I am sure that he will be pleased to see you at any time that you may find it convenient to come."

"I have every reason to be assured of that, Miss De Mar, and I trust that you give me credit for appreciating his kindness; but you cannot know how much more I would appreciate as warm a welcome from you individually. It is for an opportunity to make that clear to you that I am now asking this favor. I am—"

"Excuse me for interrupting you; but it would be utterly silly of me to pretend not to understand your meaning. My ideas may appear quaint if not prudish; but I can not help entertaining them, and I do entertain them most emphatically. I detest flirtations from the bottom of my heart."

"Now I must beg you to excuse me for interrupting you; there is nothing further from my intentions than a wish to get up a flirtation—I was never more earnest in my life than—"

"Do please pardon me, Mr. Taylor, I was not referring to you; I was referring to young ladies who, if they do not encourage, allow young men either to flirt with them, or to entertain encouragement, when no thought is given to the pain and distress that may result from their folly. When a young lady knows perfectly well that nothing but disappointment can come from such encouragement, she is dishonest—heartlessly dishonest—and has my contempt. If, as you say, you have no desire for a flirtation, we are thrown back on the other proposition—which is too sacred to be trifled with under any circumstances. And I say to you now, in all kindness, most emphatically that nothing beyond friendship can ever exist between us. Please tell me, Mr. Taylor, that you understand me, and

appreciate my position; and that I am not giving you pain; for it is that I may not at some other time give a greater pain that prompts me to what you may consider an unusual course, to make my position understood right now."

"Of course, Miss De Mar, I can but say that I understand and appreciate your motives and course in the matter. I can not say, however, that I would not be terribly hurt if I thought it would be impossible that you could change both. If only you would be kind enough to give me an opportunity of presenting my case in a more methodical manner, and under more favorable circumstances, and when you have had an opportunity of knowing me better. Nothing was further from my intentions than bringing this to an issue now."

"That is just it," said Miss De Mar. "I do not think it would be honest of me to have matters go on to a point where disappointment would bring a more acute pain. You must agree with me that it is far better to give a pin-prick than a sword-thrust; and as I know that naught but pain can come from a further prosecution of the subject, honesty and proper consideration for your feelings must make me put a stop to it in its very incipency—and this is final."

"It seems to me," he said, unable entirely to hide his rising anger, "that you might have waited, and when necessary have simply said that your heart was not your own—that you were bound to another."

Her first impulse was to resent his impertinence. Then she thought that she would endeavor again to make herself understood by this hot-headed, impul-

sive young man, though his insinuation that she had been too quick in anticipating his intentions stung her to the quick. It was a treatment that she had never dreamed could come to her; it was so far from anything she had ever known that the blood surged into her face, and for one moment her brown eyes flashed the indignation she felt; but it was for only one instant. Rising, she said in her usual sweet tone of voice,

"Shall we return?"

"No, please resume your seat, and forgive my rudeness, Miss De Mar; I am deeply penitent. The intensity of my feelings and the sadness of my disappointment must plead my excuse. Will you not please be seated, and let me tell you how very sorry I am?"

"You are but justifying the correctness of my course. If you are pained and disappointed now, how much more bitter it might be if I were to allow you to go on hoping and thinking that your suit might be encouraged. Would you convince me of your sincere regrets?"

"I assure you that there is nothing of which I am more desirous. I will do anything to convince you."

"Then there is nothing that will so thoroughly convince me, as that you will come with me now, and accept this as final." Saying which she turned to go, and perforce he followed her in silence.

When they reached the reception-room those who lived at the greatest distance had taken their departure. Mr. Taylor, pleading the distance he had to go, went also immediately. Very soon there was a general breaking away.

Miss De Mar never saw Mr. Taylor again. Alas! that she had ever seen him. Ah, the pain and distress that grew out of it! The lives that were clouded—the hearts that were broken—and the bright young lives that it cost.

CHAPTER XI

At Sandowns, on Friday following the picnic, old Uncle Lot, who was the head-man on the plantation, said to his young master:

"Uv course, Marse Hal, I's got not er word ter say ergin Marse Jack, but bein' as he's sorter 'generated inter er 'fessional man, an' it don't look like he's gwine ter marry Miss Fannie, we'll hab ter depen' on you ter keep up de 'sponsibility uv de family. An' fore de Lawd, Marse Hal, dis nigger beliebes dat's what shorten Ole Massa's an' Ole Missus' life—de way Marse Jack done, an' hain't done. De idee uv Marse Jack gwine eround er physicin' here an' dere, day an' night, jes' fer de worl' like Ole Doc Peters, when he orter be er fox huntin', an' er fishin', an' er playin' tinnis, an' er dancin' 'tindence on Miss Fannie. I tells yer de fack truff, Marse Hal, it would er shorten' my life, too, if I hadn't er knowed dat it wouldn't er done, 'cause I had ter look after you an' Marse Jack, an' all dese niggers, an' things, what I promis' Ole Massa an' Ole Missus I'd do. An' there's ernother thing what makes my ole blood bile, ter see that Furginny lawyer curvortin' eround wid Miss Fannie."

"You ought not to speak like that of Mr. Taylor."

"I knows I ortn't er, an' I begs yer pardon, Marse Hal, I didn't mean no disrespect; but, Marse Hal, ter see de De Mars er turnin' inter doctors; an' not er marryin' where dey orter; an' er Furginny lawyer splurgin' eround wid Miss Fannie, an' er tryin'

ter marry her, when Marse Jack is 'titled ter her, an' could hab her, ef he is er doctor—it's ernough ter make er owl cuss."

"Uncle Lot, I am utterly amazed at you," said his young master, though he was really more amused than angered at the old darky's vehemence, who was a great favorite, and whose loyalty and devotion to the family had made him more friend than slave, and gave him liberties in an unusual degree. He had the respect and confidence of all who knew him, and he was known far and near.

"Marse Hal, I am ermazed wid myse'f; but, Marse Hal, I jes' feels dat everything ain't gwine jes' right; I's monstrous troubled. No trouble hab ever come ter dis fambly dat I ain't had warnin's. I think dat's what upsot me ter-day. I's been havin' warnin's ergin, an' dere's trouble er comin' shore, an' de Lawd only knows what it's gwine ter be."

"There! Uncle Lot, do not prophesy any more bad luck for us; surely we have had enough trouble."

"Bless yer life, Marse Hal, yer orter know dat dis nigger would cut off his right han' 'fore he would fotch any trouble ter you or Marse Jack, ef he could help it. But I's had two warnin's hand runnin' fer two nights; an' ef it comes ergin ter-night, somethin's gwine ter happen shore."

"Why, what superstitious idea have you in your head, Uncle Lot?"

"Tain't no surtitious idee er tall, Marse Hal; ef er body cain't beliebe deir own eyes, whose eyes can dey beliebe? An' ef er body cain't beliebe deir own years, whose years can dey beliebe?"

"That is putting it very strong, Uncle Lot, I must admit."

Just then Doctor Jack drove into the yard, and, giving his horse to a stable boy, joined his brother and Lot on the lawn.

"Holding a council of war?" asked Doctor Jack. "You and Uncle Lot look as solemn as two judges."

"Probably it is a council of war, as Uncle Lot is doing battle with fate in our behalf. He says he has had two warnings, and he also says if it is repeated to-night there will come some dire calamity to us."

"Ah, I am glad it is nothing more real than that. I feared that Maud had sprained her ankle again. Suppose you tell me something of it, Uncle Lot. To be forewarned is to be forearmed, you know."

"Well, yer knows," said the old ducky, "I has some nice chickings what roost up at de old Kirk house, an' I'se been missin' some uv de ch'icest pul-lits. So night 'fore las' I slipped up dere ter watch ter see who wuz er ketchin' uv 'em. I kinder drapped off ter sleep, everythin' wuz so still an' quiet; but I wuzn't so soun' ersleep but I hyeard somethin' like er cat walkin' on de flatform. I had shet de door tight an' fas'; so I peeped out, thinkin' it wuz er cat, or maybe it wuz er 'possum dat wuz de thief. I couldn't see nothin', yit I could hear 'im. 'Thinks I, dat's mighty funny; I could hear 'im, but I couldn't see 'im. Now, Marse Jack, I had shet dat door good an' fas'; fur it won't stay shet if it ain't. De nex' minit in walked er great big cat jes' like Coots yonder on de winder sill in de sun. Says I, 'Huh, how did yer git in here? Come here, Coots.'

But it wuzn't Coots; fur it humped up its back, an' swelled out its tail an' spit at me. Yer know Coots never would er done dat. Den I says, 'Scat!' But it didn't scat a bit, nor it didn't say nothin'. Den I looked eround ter see if de back door wuz shet, but it wuz shet, too. Den de ole house 'gin ter shake an' trimble awful; an' uv course I looked eround ter see what wuz de matter, an' when I looked back, dat cat wuz plum gone, an' somethin' shet down over de hearin' uv my years so I couldn't hear nothin', an' de door wuz shet an' fassen jes' like I had fassen it."

The doctor laughed and said,

"You just slept a little sounder than you thought for, Uncle Lot, and dreamed; that was all there was to it."

"Dat's jes' what I says when de sun got up nex' mornin'. So las' night I tuck Long Jim wid me, an' I slipped back up dere. I never tole Long Jim nothin'; only I wuz gwine ter see who wuz stealin' my chickings. I never tole him er word erbout de cat. We slip in de ole house right quiet like; an' I says ter Long Jim ter shet dat door rale good an' tight, so de win' couldn't blow it open; so Long Jim he shet de door an' I seed him fassen it good. We sot dere ever so long—ter near midnight—when we hear er gre't deep sigh; an' we looked eround, an' dere stood er white lady dressed in er long white dress; an' dat door wuz as wide open as it could be. Long Jim fell off uv de bench like er terrapin off uv er log, curflumux on de floor; an' fur shore I felt kinder flippery myse'f. De white lady looked awful sorry an' gin ernother deep sigh

an' wuz gone; an' dat door wuz shet an' fassen tight, jes' like Long Jim shet it."

"Well, Uncle Lot, what are you going to do about it?" asked Doctor Jack, laughing.

"Marse Jack, yer ortn't ter laugh erbout it. Ef dat thing comes ergin ter-night somethin' 's gwine ter happen shore, I can tell yer."

"Are you going to watch again to-night, Uncle Lot?" asked the Doctor with an amused gravity.

"Shore I is. Ef dat warnin' comes ergin, Lot gwine ter see it. Ef it comes it 'll come erbout midnight; an' I wish you an' Marse Hal would go wid me, fur it means somethin' fur dis fambly; an' ef yer would go an' see fur yerselves, maybe yer could scotch it first."

So it was arranged that they would meet Lot at 11 o'clock sharp; and while there was not anything said about it between the brothers, each of them thought of it oftener than either would have had the other suspect.

"What a strong hold this thing of superstition has upon the minds of the illiterate," said Doctor Jack as he and his brother sat upon the veranda that evening after tea.

"Yes, and you may drop that prefix, and not go far wide of the truth," said his brother.

"Oh, ho, oh, ho!" laughed the doctor.

"Do you happen to know," said Mr. Hal, "that the fewest number of people are entirely free from it?"

"Indeed I do not," said the Doctor. "It is born of gross ignorance bred among simples, lives and

thrives in empty skulls, and dies ignominiously in the light of reason."

"Oh, I do not mean a belief in ghosts and hobgoblins and all that. I mean, under certain conditions and under certain circumstances, this thing of omens just will intrude upon the mind. Of course, I do not believe in them. Yet—they will come into my mind, and one can't quite shake them off. Do you not recall father's account of the death of Colonel McFarzen? He and the Colonel were standing on the latter's veranda, when a little bird flew in and lit on his head. The old gentleman nearly fainted with fright. Father was unable to reassure him by jest or reason. The Colonel insisted that he would be a dead man within twenty-four hours. At the time he was in robust health, and up to the moment of this incident was in the finest flow of spirits. So much impressed was he by this occurrence that he at once set about making a final arrangement of his affairs. Ordering his carriage, he set out for town to see his lawyer about preparing his will; he was waylaid and murdered before reaching there."

"Yes, I remember all that; and you will remember that father always spoke of it as a very strange coincidence."

"Very true, but father always recalled the coincidence if a bird, from any cause, hovered very near his head. Oh, no, father never believed in it, he was too much like his clear-headed son, the Doctor, for that; yet—he preferred that little birds should not hover too near his head. Now, for instance, take ourselves; we do not believe that there is anything in Lot's story. We think that the hour per-

haps, half waking, in the house where Kirk killed himself, and which has the reputation of being haunted, were motifs to excite his imagination. But we know that Lot is truthful, fearless, level-headed, and entirely reliable in every respect; so we are impressed to the extent of being willing to miss a half night's rest to test it."

"We would better not go if you feel that way about it," said the Doctor; "certainly I am unwilling to go if my doing so is to be construed into a confession on my part that I believe for one moment in any such nonsense. Let's not go; we can send word to Lot not to wait for us."

"Oh, yes, let's go," said Mr. Hal; "the old darky evidently wishes us to do so. He is very much in earnest about it; we may be able to explain some of the phenomena to him, and ease his mind. Don't you think it would be best?"

"All right," said the Doctor. "We will go and have a good joke on ourselves in the morning. If we are going, it is time we were off."

Half an hour later the three sat in the dark and silent old Kirk house. Another half-hour passed in silence; a screech owl trilled out her weird, chilly notes near by.

"Look out," said the Doctor, laughing.

"S-h-e-e-e-e!" said Lot.

Another period of waiting. The cocks in the nearby quarters began to crow. Having sounded the midnight watch, they lapsed into silence again. The young men began to tire of the restraint, and were making some noise.

"Sh-e-e-e!" said Lot, "She-e-e-e! I wonder

whose team dat is er comin' erlong dis way. Dem horses is er runnin' erway, sounds like ter me—shore!"

On they came, the horses' feet pattering, the chains rattling and the wagon bouncing over the rough ground, making a fearful noise. On and on it came, faster and more furious, a voice calling for help out of the din. Before the watchers could recover from their surprise the team was abreast of the old Kirk house. The three made a dash for the door; but they had double-barred it, and they got in each other's way in their haste and excitement, so that it was some little time before they had it unbarred and opened. In the mean time, they all heard the wagon and team crash into the fence, only twenty feet away. They heard the rails flying and breaking, the wagon timbers snapping, the chains clanging, and the cry for help sinking into moans, only growing weaker, until they died away in a deep, pitiful sigh.

By the time the door was open all was as still as the grave. The three men stumbled over each other in their haste to go to the rescue. Landing in the middle of the road, they strained their eyes in a vain search for the wreck. There was no wreck to be seen. Soon with matches and splinters of rich pine, which Lot's forethought had provided, a torch was ablaze; but there was not a vestige of wagon, team, or driver. Not a rail was displaced on the fence—not a splinter of broken wood—not a footprint—not a wheel-rut. There was absolutely nothing to show for the noise they had heard. The three men stood there staring at each other utterly dumfounded, each

protesting what he had heard with his own ears, each corroborating the other's statement.

The old road that passed the Kirk house had not been used for years; in fact, it was a road no longer: fences had been built across it at several places. None of these showed any sign of having been disturbed. In short, no team had gone that way, nor could have done so. Could they discredit their own ears? Puzzled beyond conception, they went home and to their rooms; but it was hours before they slept.

Over a late breakfast the young men were disposed to make a joke of their late adventure; and doubtless it would have been interesting if their arguments had been preserved. All the available occult sciences were drawn upon. This theory and that were culled and dovetailed into each other to make a satisfactory explanation. But how honestly each one's mind was satisfied thereby, neither could have answered. Lot took his straight—it was “a warnin’.”

The old darky went immediately about his duties, with which nothing short of death was ever supposed to interfere. When these were discharged, and the hands were all off to the fields, he went to the great barn with a heart bowed down with trouble beyond tongue's power to tell, and beyond the power of any one to conceive who did not know his loyalty and devotion to his young masters and their interests—even to the smallest detail. Having arrived at the barn he entered and closed the door. He took off his hat in the most reverential manner and laid it to one side; then knelt down and prayed

long and earnestly that the impending danger might "pass by on de odder side"—as he expressed it—and spare his young masters. First his confessions were thorough and truthful; from that he went into supplication that would have moved a heart of stone; which in turn was followed by arguments that would have been hard to controvert from a human standpoint. Then after a pause he would go over it all again. The sound of the dinner horn was the first intimation that the old darky had of the flight of time.

CHAPTER XII

To and fro, to and fro Doctor Jack walked, back and forth, with a quick nervous tread around the veranda—across the lawn and back—out to the barn-yard—out to the gate, and back to the veranda. Tired, he threw himself into a hammock and picked up a book and tried to read; but very soon down went the book and up sprang the Doctor, to walk the rounds again and again, nervous and restless. Nervous and restless about what? For the life of him he could not have told you. It would have added very much to his discomfort if he had known that he was being watched. He was. Uncle Lot had made a pretense of being busy about the gear-house, and had kept a close watch on his young master's actions, whom he loved almost to idolatry. He loved him because he was a De Mar; because he stood at the head of that branch of the family; because he was the oldest son of his old master, who had raised him, and had been kind to him; and what was dearer to the old man's heart, had trusted him, just as his young master was trusting him now. He had been as nervous as his young master. Why? Could he have told you? Yes—"warnin's."

The dinner hour came; but the Doctor wanted no dinner. He would wait. Hour after hour passed. Hour after hour he tramped around aimlessly. As the sun touched the tops of the tall pines on the western side of the river, old Uncle Lot

could bear the suspense no longer, and approaching his young master, doffed his hat and said,

"Marse Jack, ain't it time Marse Hal wuz comin' home?"

"Have you forgotten your manners, Lot?" said the Doctor. "Is it the servant's place to watch and comment upon his master's movements?"

Ordinarily the Doctor would not have taken exception to Lot's question, as it was a perfectly natural one for an old and trusted servant to make; and he would have answered it in the spirit in which it had been asked. But now his nerves were in a state of high tension and were easily upset. Never before had he spoken in this way to Lot.

"I begs yer pardon, Marse Jack; an' I begs Marse Hal's pardon. De Lawd knows dat I didn't mean no disrespeck—but—" The old darky could not finish his sentence, for the choking in his throat, any more than he could have seen his way back to the gear-house, for the tears that were in his eyes. He turned dejectedly away. His young master sprang after him, and stopped him by placing his hand on his shoulder, and saying,

"Stop, Uncle Lot—stop! Forgive me; it was I who was in fault. I did not mean to speak unkindly to you—to you, who have been so kind to me, and true, from my childhood up—always. I am not quite well to-day, and have been worrying on account of Hal's absence; I know not why. Forgive my impatience, Uncle Lot."

"Dere, dere! Marse Jack, you mussn't take on so erbout dat. I hadn't orter axed yer anything erbout Marse Hal's stayin' out; but somehow I jes'

couldn't help it. I feel like somethin' ain't all right. If yer think Marse Hal wouldn't care, I'll git my mule an' go after 'im."

"No, Lot, that would scarcely do; brother would not like it—if—if everything is all right."

This doubt expressed by his young master made Lot only the more anxious, and he thought very hard for a minute or two.

"Marse Jack, I jes' think erbout it, Mr. Cabnis' hogs been gittin' inter de fiel' uv corn down by de river, an' I thinks I'll git my mule an' jes' ride down dere ter see if dey's dere now."

"All right," said the Doctor, "it is too bad to have that fine field of corn damaged." The Doctor felt like smiling at the ruse of the old darky; for, to be truthful, he was very anxious about his brother, and felt better to have the faithful old man go, even on this pretense.

The sun went down and no tidings came. The deepening shadows chilled the departing day, and the home-coming kine, lowing to their hungry offspring, answering back their impatient bleating, made the watching and waiting the more unbearable. The darkness came stealing up from the east, closing the day; like some immense night-blooming flower, unfolding its dew-decked petals, the starry eyes of night took up their watch, while the world drowsed off to sleep. The lights within did not entice the Doctor indoors. Back and forth he strode; anon stopping to listen for footsteps that seemed would never come.

The younger brother, well and in the best of spirits, had driven into Sherwood that morning to

attend to some business matters, and should have returned before the dinner hour. Not being able to divine any cause for his brother's delay made his unusual absence the more remarkable, and the Doctor more anxious.

Had he once thought of Lot's prediction? Would it have added one iota to his discomfort if he had done so? He would scarcely have admitted it if it had. What wonderful liberties one's fancies can on occasion take with one's mind! Suspense usually wears and worries us to a degree which the realization rarely justifies. And while our forebodings, as a general thing, exceed the event, there do come times when it far, far surpasses the shadow of the coming.

At last the pattering of hoofs caught the Doctor's quick ear; but just as quickly did he detect the fact that there was but one horse. His brother had driven tandem. He had to wait but a few moments, however, before Lot cantered in through the gate and around the drive to the house. As he swept by in his haste, he said to the Doctor, "He's comin'."

A long breath of relief escaped the Doctor, and he turned and went into the house and ordered a hot supper at once. He had had no dinner himself, and he knew that his brother would be hungry after his drive.

The tandem rattled up the driveway, dispelling the last vestige of uneasiness. The Doctor felt like shaking himself for allowing so small a matter to upset him to such a degree. And when Mr. Hal walked into the room the Doctor was very much occupied with a book, and without looking up, said,

"Good-evening, brother; a little late, eh?"

"Yes, I fear that I am."

There was something unnatural in the tone of it, short as the sentence was, that struck the Doctor's ear. A quick glance took in his brother's face. There was a smile there that was not a smile; there was an air of levity, but it was a miserable counterfeit. The Doctor's nerves had not had sufficient time to regain their accustomed composure, he had been nervous and uneasy for hours, so that it required very little to startle him now. Rising from his chair, he crossed over to his brother's side, and putting his hand on his shoulder, then his arm around him, said,

"What is it, Hal, my dear boy, what is it? Something has happened, something has gone wrong—what is it?"

"Nothing to be alarmed about, Jack. Shall we not have some tea?"

"I have ordered a hot supper, thinking that you would be hungry after your drive. Is there nothing more serious than hunger and fatigue, brother? You look ten years older than you did this morning."

"Whatever there is, brother, will keep until we have had something to eat," said Mr. Hal.

The young men took seats at the table. The Doctor addressed himself to the tempting meal, and was prepared to pay the cook the sincerest compliment; but looking across the table, he noticed that his brother was eating absolutely nothing, and that the wonted happy, contented expression which made Hal the handsomest man in the county was missing.

So affected was the Doctor by this discovery that his appetite failed him, and it soon became apparent that the meal was a miserable failure. They laid down their knives and forks, and ordered the butler to have the dishes removed, which the servants did quickly. Having the room to themselves, the Doctor said,

"Now, brother, what can be the matter? What is it?"

The younger brother arose from his chair and took a turn around the room and back. Resuming his seat he said,

"Brother, I would gladly spare you trouble and anxiety, yet there must never be any want of confidence between us; and in so serious a matter you should not be kept in the dark; in fact, you ought to know, and must know all about it."

"Hal, you must realize that you are talking in riddles; I can have no idea what this mystery is," said the Doctor, with growing impatience.

"Well, that you may not be kept in suspense, and to make a long story short, I am to go on the field of honor before to-morrow's sunrise."

The Doctor, springing from his chair and facing his brother, stood silent and motionless, trying to comprehend the import of his brother's words. He knew that he was not jesting, that he meant exactly what he had said. At the same time, this announcement came like a clap of thunder from a clear sky. He had never dreamed that his brother had an enemy in the world; nor could he conceive of any combination of circumstances that would have led

up to such a catastrophe. These and many other thoughts on this line flashed through his mind with a rapidity of which the action of the human mind alone is capable. When he found his speech, he exclaimed with tigerish fierceness,

"Hal, what is this you are telling me? Let me know all at once; keep nothing back. I must know all. Oh, what folly—what miserable folly!"

His brother's face, which had been ashen with suppressed excitement, in turn flushed scarlet. The Doctor observed the change; and observing more closely, found deep lines, marks of pain, care, and anxiety that were new to this bright, handsome young face; and his heart upbraided him as never before. Grasping his brother's hand, he cried,

"Pardon me, dear Hal; forgive me, dear brother!" And his voice sank into a low plaintiveness that was irresistible in its pathos, while he continued, "I did not mean that you had willingly done anything silly; but you know how little sympathy either of us have for this barbarism called the 'code of honor.' I utterly abhor it, and detest it; from the bottom of my heart I detest it! It is no evidence of bravery; on the other hand, it is miserable moral cowardice. I can not—"

"Hold, brother! I know your sentiments on the subject, as you know mine; but you must admit that conditions—unavoidable circumstances—might arise that alter the case."

"I am not at all sure of that," began the Doctor, for the moment almost losing patience again. But his brother held up his hand in an appealing way—a hand strong and true—a hand that had never been

raised in anger toward any human being. A hand that had always been first to aid the poor, to lift the fallen, and to give the manly grip of true friendship; was it now to be raised in mortal combat? All this flashed through the Doctor's mind. Making a powerful effort to compose himself, he resumed his seat. Just then some one made a noise at the door; the Doctor, feeling sure that it was Lot, said, "Come in." The door was opened very slowly, and in came the old servant. The brothers were struck with the expression on his countenance—intense anxiety was written in every line of his honest black face.

"What is it, Uncle Lot?" asked the younger brother. For about the first time in his life the old man was in want for words to express himself.

The Doctor knew better than his brother how uneasy the old darky had been during the afternoon and came to his relief.

"Brother, Uncle Lot has been as anxious as myself during the day. You know that we have no truer friend in the world. We know that we can depend upon his discretion. His good, common sense has stood us in good stead in many doubtful moments. His solicitude for our welfare I am sure has prompted this seeming intrusion. Shall we not trust him in this instance?"

"Oh, certainly," said Mr. Hal, "I have no objection to his hearing the story; and I am at fault in my knowledge of Uncle Lot if he does not endorse my course."

"God bless yer, Marse Hal, fur dat speech. Thank yer, thank yer er thousand times, sir."

“Take that chair, Uncle Lot, and sit down,” said the Doctor.

“No, I thank you, Marse Jack, I’ll stand.”

“Sit down, Uncle Lot; sit down, we are friends here—sit down.”

Thus commanded, he drew a chair well back and sat down on the edge of it. This kind consideration for him made his face wrinkle with pleasure for the moment, smoothing out some of the care-worn lines that had furrowed his face on his entry into the room.

CHAPTER XIII

"Now tell us," said the Doctor, "what was the row?"

"There was no row," began the younger brother, who in turn spoke in a manner and tone that was foreign to the brothers. Evidently he dreaded going into the painful recital. By far he would have preferred going to the meeting without informing his brother until it was all over. In fact, he had intended to take that course at first, but on second thought was convinced that it was not best, or right. "There was no row; Mr. Taylor was, at least, too much of a gentleman for that." At the mention of Mr. Taylor's name, both Doctor Jack and Uncle Lot sprang to their feet.

"Mr. Taylor!" exclaimed the Doctor.

"That Ferginny lawyer!" said Lot, who immediately added, "Excuse me, young masters."

"Yes—Mr. Taylor," answered Mr. Hal. The three stood motionless and silent, looking from one to the other. Doctor Jack and Lot, in utter amazement; Mr. Hal with a look of impatience to have done with a disagreeable task.

"Go on, brother," said Doctor Jack, "and explain, if it can be explained."

"The first man I met on my arrival in town was Colonel Morris. He seemed very much excited, and I noticed quite a number of men standing around in knots, as if in lively expectancy. The Colonel put his arm through mine and led me across the

street to his office. He closed the door after us and locked it. I made some laughing remark at this precaution, when he said,

“ ‘Well, you are the coolest man I have seen to-day. The whole town has been on tiptoe for the last two hours, waiting for you or your brother, or probably both of you; and here you come as calm and collected as if you had driven into church. I told the boys that you would come before the day was out. I have known the De Mars for generations; I knew that you would come.’ ”

“I said to him, ‘Colonel, you have me at a disadvantage. I am sure that I do not understand the situation, if there be a situation out of the ordinary. I did not come to church; but came on ordinary business matters, which I cannot conceive of being of any interest to any one but myself. I had no engagement with any one; no one in town knew of my coming.’ ”

“ ‘You are a cool one,’ he said. ‘Your old grandfather did not have better nerve; and everybody knows that he never showed the white feather to a Red Coat, nor to a painted savage either, nor when he winged General Haughton down at the Bluff. Just a little private business brought you to town—ha, ha, ha, ha!’ laughed he. ”

“ ‘You can imagine that I grew impatient of this senseless chatter, and I said to him that I did not see the joke.’ ”

“ ‘Joke!’ said he, ‘there is no joke about it; I can tell you that. Mr. Taylor and his friends are ready and waiting for you. You will have a foe-

man worthy of your steel. I hear that he is a dead shot.'

" 'Mr. Taylor! What of Mr. Taylor?' I answered. 'I am not aware that his marksmanship will interest me.'

" 'Oh,' said the Colonel, shrugging his shoulders. I told him that I had not the slightest idea as to what he meant."

" 'Now come,' said he, 'haven't you heard what everybody else has heard for the last two days—what Mr. Taylor has been saying about a member of your family—and that member, a lady?'

"I told him that he must excuse me, and started out, when he placed his hand on my arm and said, 'Everybody has been expecting you or your brother—'

"I could not bear that any longer, and said, 'Excuse me, Colonel, I have heard nothing'; and with that I walked out of his office."

"He called to me as I was leaving, and said, 'You want to be a little careful how you pass down street, if you have not come prepared to take care of yourself.'

"To this I made no reply. I had given cause for offense to no one. Certainly I was not going to seek a difficulty about a matter of which I knew nothing. I could not discuss family affairs with an outsider. I walked on down Main street, intending to go to Charlie Strong's office, and if possible get the straight of this affair. When I had passed on some distance I heard some one clear his throat in a loud and noisy way, as if to attract attention. I paid no attention to it; then it was repeated and

followed by a loud guffaw from the crowd. I still paid no attention and walked on. I found Charlie in his office, expecting me, as he had heard that I was in town. In reply to his question, I told him I had heard nothing except what Colonel Morris had told me, which I repeated to him in full. It is not necessary to repeat what Mr. Taylor had said; it was enough that he had spoken disrespectfully of Cousin Fannie."

"What could have possessed the man?" said the Doctor. "It is an open secret that he is madly in love with her."

"Yes, that is just where the trouble comes in. At his first advance he was given to understand that his suit could not be entertained. Fannie treated him just as any other honorable young woman would have done. Having an intimation of his infatuation, she took the first opportunity to set him right. It seems that this straight-forward candor was what offended him. He felt so confident of his suit that he was unable to understand how any young lady could fail to see the desirability of such an alliance. He seemed to take it as an insult that she should not have taken more time to consider his offer. He began to drink and soon lost his head; and so far forgot himself as to speak disrespectfully of her on the streets and in promiscuous crowds.

"Charlie's explanation of his conduct is that in the first instance he was under the influence of a stimulant when he spoke, and that afterward he was twitted by some indiscreet person, and told that he would be held to account for it. This led him to drink more deeply, until he was nearly, if not quite,

crazed, when he talked still more recklessly. In the mean time, he had become so wrought up that he would not listen to his best friends; their advice seemed to inflame him the more. Charlie said that when he heard an intimation of it he went to some of Mr. Taylor's best and most influential friends and asked them to go with him to Mr. Taylor and talk it over with him; and if nothing else, they might induce him to sober up. They went, but it did no good; rather, it made matters worse. He would listen to no one. Besides, his conduct was such as to show that he would insult either of us at sight.

"Charlie wrote a note up to his father, and the Judge came down at once. When informed of the situation, he said that he could not believe the report. He had been so favorably impressed with young Taylor, who had come with such high recommendations from some of the Judge's most valued friends in Richmond and Washington. Besides, he had gone in and out in his adopted home in such an exemplary way as to gain the respect of the people of the town with whom he had come in contact. He had shown considerable talent, and it was difficult for them to realize that he was capable of such conduct. The Judge went to him in person, and explained to him the folly of his course, aside from the injustice he was doing an innocent party. He was urged to consult his own interest, and was told that he was compromising his best friends. Those and many more cogent reasons were presented to him, the Judge winding up with a personal appeal, as a kindness to himself as a mutual friend. He ex-

hausted every argument, but to no avail. Charlie said it was pitiable to see his father's face when he came back from the interview; he looked years and years older, so pinched and drawn with the pain he had endured.

"While we were talking it over, the Judge came in. He threw his arms around me and said, 'I had just heard that you were in town and hastened to see you. I hope that you have not met Mr. Taylor?' He seemed much relieved when I told him that I had not. He at once proposed that I get into his carriage and go to his home. I knew that I could depend upon his friendship and discretion; so I complied with his request. We left Charlie at the office. When we were alone in the carriage he said that he hoped that I would pay no attention to anything that Mr. Taylor was saying, as it could not affect us in the slightest degree. I thanked him for his opinion, which coincided with my own ideas. Of course, it was a great relief to have his advice; and we felt that the matter was settled.

"You can imagine our surprise when we returned to the office to find Charlie in the greatest distress. It seems that the suggestion had reached Mr. Taylor's ears that I would pay no attention to him, which incensed him beyond all control. He went out on the streets, saying that the De Mars must have deteriorated into cowards, if they had ever been anything else. Old Major Zackie happened to be passing and heard the remark. He stopped and said to Mr. Taylor, 'You are carrying this thing too far, young man. The De Mars are, and have always been, gentlemen. Furthermore, they are not,

nor have they ever been, cowards; and what is more to the point, it will not do for any one to say that they are, in this community.' This was the first defiance, and enraged him the more.

"'I repeat,' said Mr. Taylor, 'that the De Mars are cowards, and I wish to add—their friends seem to be afflicted with the same weakness.'

"It requires but a feeble exercise of the imagination to know that the old Major did not brook that from any one. And it was with difficulty that his friends succeeded in getting him off the street. And what is more serious still, the old gentleman insists on calling him out; nor have we been able to dissuade him.

"Now, brother, you have the whole story. What was left for me to do? Stand by and see our dear old friend do battle in defense of De Mar honor?"

Doctor Jack, who had sat motionless during this recital, stirring never a muscle, scarcely moving the lids of his eyes, so intensely staring into his brother's face; listening in wrapt attention to every word that fell from his lips, said slowly and deliberately,

"No."

Old Uncle Lot, who had gradually leaned farther and farther forward, until his chair was tipped on its front legs, his arms hanging down straight by his sides, his fists clenched like a vise, his mouth open, his eyes blazing like coals of fire, now threw his clenched fists over his head, and shaking them with all his might, said,

"No, Marse Hal—not ef de whole uv Fair Bluff is soaked wid our blood."

Mr. Hal drew from his pocket a bundle of papers, which he handed to his brother, saying,

"Here is the correspondence, if you care to see it."

The first was a note from Mr. Taylor and ran thus :

"Will you be so kind as to inform me, if your brother, Doctor De Mar, will be in town to-day."

Signed very formally—"HORACE TAYLOR."

In reply :

"In answer to your note of even date would say,—My brother, Doctor De Mar, will not be in town to-day."

Mr. Taylor's second note :

"I had naturally supposed that your brother, being the elder of the two, would be the proper person to dispose of any little affair that might be awaiting settlement. But older brothers have been known before to sacrifice the younger. *I am* in town to-day."

Mr. Hal's reply :

"Your remarkable note received. Since arriving in town this morning, certain rumors have come to my attention, through channels which leave no room for doubt as to their accuracy, wherein you have seen fit to speak disrespectfully of a lady member of my family. I trust that I may expect to receive from you, at your earliest convenience, a full dis-

claimer, in writing, of any intentions of giving offense."

The third note from Mr. Taylor:

"You will please be informed that a Taylor never retracts what he has said, at the dictation of anyone."

Which drew forth the following:

"My friend, Charles Strong, Esqr., will present this communication, and will be pleased to receive the address of a friend of yours, to whom you may delegate the power to act for you, in arranging for a meeting, when you shall afford me the opportunity of wiping out such a gratuitous insult."

"Charlie carried the note to Mr. Taylor," resumed Mr. Hal, "and was referred upon the spot to Colonel Wiggins. In their interview which followed, that gentleman expressed his regrets as to the action of his friend; but as Mr. Taylor had fully made up his mind, and would not listen to advice, there was really nothing to do but proceed with the arrangements for the meeting, which was done."

"Hal, you have acted too hastily in this matter," said Doctor Jack; "you should have waited and consulted me."

"Brother, there is no time to waste over that point now. I am as much opposed to dueling as you are, but the circumstances were peculiar, as you must admit; it would not have done to let our old friend, Major Zackie, take up our difficulties. I was forced to take the course I did, or have had a street broil; I chose this."

"You are too hasty again, brother; had I been there, I doubtless would have acted just as you have done; but you should have left it to me as the elder, to have settled it with Mr. Taylor."

"No, brother, I acted deliberately and under the advice of Judge Strong. His life-long, loyal friendship for our family entitled him to my confidence. We discussed it in all its bearings. You know, Jack, that the heads of both families wanted you to marry Cousin Fan; she may have expected something of the kind herself. I know, my dear brother, that this is a very delicate matter, and that it is painful to you to have it discussed, even among ourselves; but this is a serious matter, and it is best to understand each other fully, and each other's motives. Now, it is no secret in the family that you do not intend marrying her; might it not have been a little embarrassing, not to say compromising, for you to have assumed the role of her champion on a field of honor, and with an avowed admirer of her for an antagonist?"

"Hal, this is terribly sudden. We are so unprepared for anything of the kind. It is difficult for me to see, that if it must be done, that I ought not to be the one to do it. But if our dear and well-tried friend Judge Strong has carefully thought it out, in all probability you are right, brother. I would not unnerve you—but—we can not know how it will all end. Have you thought it out in all its possibilities?"

"Yes, Jack. I went over and had our lawyer draw up all necessary papers. Everything has been attended to, thanks to the advice of Judge Strong.

It was the attention to these matters that detained me so late to-night."

At this juncture, Lot, who had remained almost motionless since his outburst of indignation, became restless, and thereby attracted the Doctor's attention, who said,

"Well, Uncle Lot, what do you think about it now?"

"Ef he wuz er puffect gintleman, he'd never sed nuthin' ergin Miss Fannie. She is de nicest lady in de worl', since Ole Missus is gone—an' ef he ain't de kind uv gintleman we is, den Marse Hal got no bus'ness messin' his hands wid 'im. I never did 'prove uv dat man, but ef de Jedge says it is all right, an' ef yer both says it is all right, an' ef ole marse, Major Zackie, wants ter fight 'im, den I got nothin' more ter say."

"It is too late now to moralize, Uncle Lot. You must have the horses at the door by four o'clock sharp," said Mr. Hal. "The tandem and the—"

"Leave that to me, Hal, I will see that everything is attended to. It is now late, and you must have some sleep."

"I do not care to sleep," said Mr. Hal.

"Yes, but you must all the same. I will see that you are called in ample time. Now, good-night, brother."

They caught each other in a long and loving embrace, the older one pressing a kiss on the broad white forehead of the younger. Neither spoke, their hearts were too full for words. No one could possibly tell what the next twelve hours would bring forth. In that time hundreds would pass into eter-

nity; but the most of those would be escaping from pain and suffering, to many it would be a boon. It is quite another thing, when one in the heyday of young manhood, with all the possibilities of a lifetime before him, has to stake his life against life—and for what?

In silence that night the brothers parted. The younger retiring to his room, the older one to the library, where he summoned Lot and the butler. There everything was arranged in detail. The tandem was to be hitched to the cart, and the coach was to follow, but to be kept back out of sight, to be used in case anything serious should happen. All having been arranged, the servants were dismissed. Lot lingered and said,

“Marse Jack, you nur Marse Hal has never denied me nothin’, please don’t deny me now—let me go wid yer ter-morrer.”

“Don’t you think, Uncle Lot, that you had better remain on the place? By morning it will be learned that something unusual is happening, and there will be no one to look after things and keep them straight.”

“Boss, I’ll answer fur every nigger on dis place; nuffin’ will go wrong yere. An’ ef anythin’ goes wrong wid Marse Hal, Lot mus’ be dere. Ole Marsa an’ Ole Missus spects me ter look arfter you an’ Marse Hal, an’ when I meets ’em on de odder side, I wants ter tell ’em dat I done it.”

Doubtless the old darky’s mind was full of the “warnin’s” he had had. He had too much native tact to refer to it now. Who shall say that they did not come into the minds of his young masters, who

did not believe in them? Lot as usual had his way, and was permitted to go. He could hitch a pair of horses to the buckboard, and take an extra man with him.

Having dismissed the servants, the Doctor went to the surgery. Instruments were looked over; bandages and anesthetics, and all the articles necessary for an emergency operation, were carefully gathered and arranged. The occupation was a relief from the mental strain. As the hour for the start approached there was nothing left but to wait and think. The suspense was overpowering, but waiting comes to an end. The striking of the hall clock announcing the fateful hour was a relief in a way, for it meant action. The Doctor knocked at his brother's door; no answer came; again he knocked and was answered.

"What is it?"

"It is I, brother. It is time—it is three o'clock."

"All right; I remember; I will be with you in a few moments."

While no one else in the house had slept, the man who was most nearly touched had slept sweetly—thanks to a merciful Providence!

The next half hour saw the tandem spinning out at the gate and down the road, skirting the river—the silent but ever moving river. A half mile behind came the buckboard with Uncle Lot and Dan. Following close came the family carriage drawn by the four fine grays. Was the carriage to be simply a family carriage on the return, or an ambulance, or a *hearse*—who could tell?

There was no effort at conversation between the brothers; each was too busy with his own thinking. None but the searcher of all hearts knew the thoughts of the young men as they spun over the road, skirting the river that morning—thoughts that were never to find expression in words. Now and again the Doctor cast furtive glances toward the east. For some time there was no indication of the approaching day; but later, when the Doctor's quick eye caught the first inkling of the coming light, he shook the lines and sent the horses flying at a still more rapid gait.

Watch dogs rushed out at them as they passed the farm-houses, snapping at the horses' heels; but they were all unheeded. In this and that direction the chanticleers were sounding their shrill notes bidding the eve good-night and the day good-morrow. As the dawn brightened, the birds began twittering preludes to their matin songs. On and on the spirited horses sped. The cattle that had slept on the way-side were getting afoot, shaking the sand and the dew from their fat sides, stretching their cramped limbs, and making their bells jangle. All nature was awaking to a new day, whose close will record thousands of pleasant heart-throbs—as many heart-aches—as many wooings—as many nuptials—as many births—as many deaths; millions of groans, of laughter, of sighs and smiles, until one's mind is overwhelmed with the contemplation of it. The day advances until everything becomes visible. The beauties of nature assert themselves: hill and dale, land and water, tint upon tint in endless shades and effects, appeal to all that is good in man; because

these things speak of an all-powerful Creator, of His wisdom, might, and mercy. All and everything was peace and good-will, except the troubled hearts of the men about to engage in the fast culminating tragedy.

The road ran near the river for several miles, now descending almost to its brink, again swinging out through the dense forests of oaks and towering magnolias: making short cuts across the bends; then coming in again to the stream; the hills beyond forming an effective background to it all. How peaceful and attractive nature was that morning, with nothing but man to mar it!

CHAPTER XIV

The dawn had scarcely established the day when the tandem swept around a sharp curve and up on a beautiful bluff overlooking the river. Mr. Charles Strong, and a friend who had come with him, had already arrived. Each tongue was loosened; faces brightened, the tension was lowered. Greetings were exchanged in cheerier tones than might have been expected. The buckboard soon arrived, and in a very short time cups of strong black coffee were being served. Sounds of approaching wheels fell upon the expectant ears, and in the next few moments Mr. Taylor and his friends appeared. Hats all round were raised and formal bows exchanged. The latter party, appearing not to have provided any refreshments, Doctor De Mar sent coffee and sandwiches to them. There was no hesitancy in their acceptance; and hats were raised in acknowledgment of the courtesy as they drank the steaming beverage.

The seconds met and shook hands, and entered upon the preliminaries at once. There was some parleying as to the ground. If the parties stood east and west it was deemed that one or the other would have the advantage on account of the light. If they stood north and south, there were certain trees in line which would give an advantage to one or the other. The seconds could not agree. One proposed that they should draw straws to decide. The other would not agree without consulting the principals. Mr. Taylor said that he thought it would be fair to draw lots. Mr. De Mar said,

"You gentlemen decide in any way you may choose; then let Mr. Taylor take choice of positions."

Mr. Strong protested; but his principal interrupted him, saying,

"Charlie, I have decided. It must not be said that a De Mar was advantaged by lot in a case like this."

Again the seconds met, and in a few moments were staking off the ground.

The bluff was covered with a beautiful sward. Much of the best blood of three or four States had fertilized this historic field. One might have expected that it would have cursed the ground and blighted everything that tried to grow there. But it is one of the inexorable laws of nature that good shall come of evil; life springs from death. Few places in this country had witnessed so many bloody encounters as this. No fairer landscape ever blessed the eye than this rolling hill and its surrounding scenery. Here and there, fields in the highest state of cultivation broke the scheme of green. The river at this point had high banks clad in mantles of every tint of green and brown; all shaded by splendid old live-oaks, with their long crooked limbs draped with Spanish moss and orchids; interspersed with magnolias, now in full bloom, which dropped their rich perfume to mingle with that of the sweet shrub and honeysuckle. The morning's broadening light brought out the scene at its very best. Every blade of grass held its dew drops ready to reflect the rays of the rising sun, whose appearance was to be the signal for the combat. The birds overhead warbled

their cheerful lays, all unconscious of human passion and strife.

The sun is on the point of rising. The hour has come. The principals are stationed. Revolvers are placed in their hands. A second stands half-way between them and says,

"Gentlemen, you will be asked, 'Are you ready?' On receiving the reply, 'Ready,' I shall say, 'One—two—three!' At the word three, you will begin firing, and fire at will."

The principals raised their hats, and the second turned on his heel and walked ten paces to one side. There was a moment of most painful suspense.

"Gentlemen, are you ready?"

"Ready!" came the responses as if spoken by one man.

Then it seemed that a month was crowded into the next instant of time, so intense was the suspense. I doubt if a breath was drawn on that bluff while it lasted. Old Uncle Lot had gradually sunk to his knees, close by where Doctor Jack stood, his hands clasped tight over his chest, in the attitude of prayer. It was in attitude only, for no thought of his went beyond his young Marse Hal standing there—at death's door. It was for only an instant.

"One—two—three!"

At the word "three" there was a simultaneous flash and report. There was an instant of pause—and the smoke lifted. It was apparent that both shots had taken effect; but both men remained standing. Then rapid shots followed in quick succession, and both sank to the ground—Mr. Taylor dead and Mr. De Mar dying.

Doctor De Mar ran to his brother's assistance.

"Brother, bear me away quickly," said Mr. Hal, "do not let me die on this accursed ground!"

Quickly he was placed in the carriage. A powerful stimulant was given him, and the spirited horses dashed away. They had not proceeded far, however, before the dying man said,

"Brother, if we are out of sight of that place, please stop and put me out on the grass. I am dying—let me rest—I am so tired."

The coach was brought to a standstill. The wounded man was gently lifted out and placed upon a blanket on the ground. He said,

"Give me your hand, brother dear. Hold my hand tighter, Jack. It grows all so dark and chilly; take my other hand, Uncle Lot. There—good-by both." And he was dead.

The Doctor sank beside his brother's body; but no tears came to soften his grief. Uncle Lot had been kissing and chafing his master's cold hand, crying most piteously—as if his heart would break; but seeing the Doctor sink to the ground, he ran quickly to the coach and brought a flask of brandy, of which he gave his master a liberal dose. Ever prompt in an emergency, he had the remains of his young master wrapped in a blanket and placed in the coach, and ordered the driver to get home as quickly as possible. He also ordered Dan to gather up everything else that had been left and to follow the carriage. Then he assisted the Doctor into the cart, and taking the lines himself, drove the tandem, going by a different road, in order that the Doctor could not see the carriage on the way.

Not a word passed between his master and Lot, each busy with thoughts that were too harrowing for utterance. Several times during the drive did the old man lean over and tenderly kiss his young master's hand. This act was the first to turn loose the floodgate of his tears.

The funeral services that followed were of the simplest kind, and as private as possible, their hosts of friends respecting the Doctor's wishes in that respect.

CHAPTER XV

Dull and dreary were the next few weeks at Sandowns. Doctor De Mar shut himself in from all the world. Neither relatives nor friends could induce him to go out. Lot's devices and excuses, though many and ingenious, were all of no avail. Had his brother's death been less tragic, he would have been heartbroken at his loss; as it was, there was a sense of deep humiliation added to the sorrow he felt, and he wished above everything else to be left to himself. The only living thing that he did not repulse was poor old Coots. She remained with him nearly all the time, even to the neglect of her twin kittens. Climbing up into his lap, and rearing up with her paws upon his chest, she would rub her head against his face, purring and purring, as if trying to show her sympathy. Sometimes she would stretch herself on the carpet at his feet and toy with them to attract his attention. At other times she would come waddling in with one of her kittens in her jaws, and laying it down in front of him, play with it, and look up at him. There was something in this mute show of sympathy that touched his heart more nearly than any words spoken by human lips could have done.

Time wore on, as time will, whether freighted with joy or sorrow, and one day, when all had despaired of interesting him in anything, he sent for Lot, and said,

"Uncle Lot, I can stand this no longer. I am going abroad. I have no idea how long I shall be ab-

sent. I would never come back were it not for you and the others."

"Marse Jack, yer mussn't talk like dat. Ef yer never comes back, what would happen ter us niggers? An', Marse Jack, if yer feels like yer must go erway from home, ain't dis country big ernough, widout yer goin' ercross de ocean? 'Member, master, dat you is de last uv Ole Massa's family, an' yer cain't th'ow off de 'sponsibility uv de family."

"What you say, Uncle Lot, is all true, and I appreciate your interest; but there is very little danger in ocean travel these days. Anyway, I have decided to go. You, of course, will have charge of everything. You have managed well heretofore, and I will trust you now. What I wanted to say to you is, if I am not back home by the time the crop is ready to market, you will be governed by Mr. McLaughlin at the bank. You will hear from me through him. If you should wish to communicate with me, go to him; he will know my whereabouts."

"Shore, Marse Jack, I'll do my bes', jes' de same as ef you wuz in de house, an' wuz liable ter come out an' say, 'Lot, what's yer doin'?' "

Two years have passed since Doctor De Mar said good-by to Lot at the boat landing, and had made his way abroad, to get away from the pain and desolation at home. The attachment between the brothers had been of the tenderest character. Both of an affectionate disposition, both innately refined, both reared as gentlemen, their tastes were congenial—in short, they had been friends, ever, and were naturally all in all to each other. The manner of

the younger brother's taking off rendered the shadow all the darker that fell on the Doctor's pathway. At home everything reminded him of his brother, and he had gone away, traveling here and there and everywhere, to lose himself. At the end of these two years, he felt that he might come home. He felt, too, his duty to his faithful servants, and his other varied interests demanded his return.

He landed in New York, and went to the Fifth Avenue Hotel, where the family had always stopped when visiting the city, and by so doing seemed to have made a mistake, because there everything reminded him of his lost and loved ones. He found himself miserable in the extreme, as miserable as when he went away. Then he was glad that he had gone to that hotel, because he found that he was not as well prepared to go home as he had imagined. So, instead of going directly home, as he had intended, he decided to spend some time in this country before returning to the scenes where everything would remind him of his loss, and would open afresh the too-recently healed wounds. He had a horror of the lonely desolation from which he had fled two years ago. Should he spend the time in traveling? No, he was tired and worn out with the constant moving from place to place.

After a few days of rest he sought Mr. Dolmark, a member of their banking firm, and said to him that he would like to find some quiet place in the country where he could have some fishing and hunting. He would prefer a private house or a very quiet boarding-house. After a moment's thought, Mr. Dolmark informed him that he knew a place

that would suit him exactly; and he gave him the address of the widow of an old friend of his—a Mrs. Hanner—who would take one boarder for the summer months. There were horses and every facility for hunting and fishing.

The next week found Doctor De Mar quartered at a delightful country seat, Hazelhurst, the home of Mrs. Hanner, situated within a mile of the village of Brampton, which boasted of a hotel, a railroad depot, a school house, a church and a score of dwellings, all of which was supposed to house a few hundred people—big, little, old and young—black and white. “The brother in black,” however, was limited to one solitary individual, and he a disgrace to his kind.

“Poor slave Dick,” as he was called there in Brampton, had found on his first entrance to the village a good stock in trade for himself by appealing to the sympathies of the kind-hearted citizens, which he did by recounting some blood-curdling stories of the horrors of slavery, and that he had escaped death only by flight. These stories were wonderful to listen to, certainly, and doubtless made the blood run chill down the spines of some of his hearers; and equally, doubtless, procured for him, in many instances, the best the house afforded. “Poor slave Dick” found sympathy everywhere and every day; until it gradually developed that Dick saw no reason why he should be expected to work, when work was not necessary to his well-being. He was the only negro that many of the citizens had ever seen; and, naturally, was considered a typical specimen of a slave; and doubtless his stories were but so

many corroborations of what they had been taught to believe the facts to be.

The Doctor found his boarding-house all and more than he had anticipated. He had a suite of large, airy rooms. There were broad verandas with their hammocks and great arm-chairs for his comfort, and a nicely kept lawn swept down to the gate. He soon investigated the stable and found a very satisfactory saddle-horse. He scoured the countryside hither and thither on Brown Nelly. He had not long been thus comfortably situated before Dick discovered him, and approached him as a fresh "sucker"; and, as was his wont, recounted the old story of his hardships and miseries as a slave in the South. The Doctor soon sized him up, but did not let Dick know where he was from. He gave him some change, which was accepted as his due, rather than a kindness.

The fishing was fine and the hunting good, the saddle-horse was satisfactory; so between the three, the Doctor's time sped bravely. His health was improved, and his spirits soon regained their wonted buoyancy. On one fine morning the fishing had yielded a good catch. The day was perfect, and he had thrown himself down on the grass in a friendly shade by the banks of the stream, half dreaming; the other half, letting his mind drift or rest in such fancies as were suggested by the beautiful piece of landscape across the brook, or by the rising of a trout, or the flight of a bird; by everything, by nothing in particular. Suddenly there was a splash in the water, just around a sharp bend in the stream, and a scream in a woman's voice. Springing to his

feet, in a moment he was on the spot from whence the outcry came. He saw a tall, slender young woman suspended over the stream, holding on by her hands to an overhanging limb, one foot lightly resting on a broken limb of a decayed tree-top that had fallen into the stream. A fishing-rod and a part of a dead tree were floating down stream. The situation was apparent. He hastened to say,

"Hold steady, and I will help you!"

"Come quickly then, my hands are giving out!" she cried.

In an instant he planted his foot upon the stump of a tree; and grasping a strong limb overhead with his left hand, passed his right around her waist. You may doubt it if you will, but there came to him in that act a sense of ownership—a strange sensation—that sent a thrill of strength through every fiber of his being.

"Now, let go," said he.

"Oh, are you sure that you can hold me? The water is very deep here."

"Sure! let go." There was something in the tone of it that gave confidence, and she relaxed her hold.

The tall, slender form proved heavier than he had counted on, and it required all his strength to swing his fair burden around to the ground. The effort was successful; but in making the turn, he sprained his ankle severely; so painfully, indeed, that he could not support his weight upon it, and he sank to the ground. Then for the first time he saw the face of the lady, all suffused with mantling blushes, that were distressing to behold. While the face was not one that would have passed muster as a beauty, it

was one that could not be easily forgotten when once seen.

"Oh, this is distressing indeed! Are you really hurt?" she asked.

"Not seriously, I can assure you," said the Doctor.

"I shall not be able to express my gratitude for your timely assistance, and I will be less able to express my regrets if you are seriously hurt."

"You certainly owe me no thanks; I acted on the spur of the occasion. Not being deliberately done, I am due no thanks. As for the hurt, I am something of a doctor, and will be able to take care of that." After a moment he added, "I am Doctor De Mar, at Mrs. Hanner's." If he thought that she would reveal her identity, he was doomed to disappointment. She looked steadily at him for an instant.

"Shall I go for assistance?" she asked.

"Is that necessary? Let me see if I cannot walk, or at least hobble home; it is but a short distance."

He had risen to his feet, but his ankle refused to support his weight.

"If it will not trouble you—I presume that you live in the village—you may stop at Mrs. Hanner's and ask that the phaeton be sent down for me."

As simple and natural as this request was, it seemed to confuse her, something for which the Doctor could not account at that time; he understood it very well later on.

"Certainly," she said. "I am sure that you should not attempt to walk. Are you comfortable? Is there nothing that I can do for you?" And scarcely

waiting for a reply to her questions, she hastened away.

In a very short time the man came with the phaeton, and conveyed the Doctor to the house, where he was made comfortable, being able to apply the necessary dressings himself. No explanations were asked or given at the time: he had sprained his ankle, that was all. The following morning the Doctor insisted on being allowed to hobble down stairs, and into the cool sitting-room; for he felt that his fair adventuress would call to make some inquiry, and he wanted to see her. Mrs. Hanner and two young daughters did what they could to entertain him; but very soon they were convinced of their failure by his constant absent-mindedness. He was restless, and was constantly watching the front gate. Some one came, it was the butcher; then another one, it was the baker; then the milkman—that was all. No one came to inquire—not even a note. When he could bear the suspense no longer, he recounted the occurrences of the previous day.

“What young lady could it have been?” said Mrs. Hanner.

“I am sure that I do not know; it was she that came for the phaeton.”

“We did not see her, and knew nothing of the accident until you came. She must have given the order to the man herself,” said Miss Ada. “We might recognize her from a description.”

“Yes,” said the mother, “that is true. Can you describe her, Doctor?”

“Spare me,” said that gentleman, “I would not like to attempt that.”

"You might venture on a general description. We would not bind you to attempt to describe her as she may have appeared to you at the time," said Mrs. Hanner, laughing. "You might say if she were tall or short, blonde or brunette, beautiful or otherwise."

"I would say that she is young, tall, a blonde, not beautiful, and certainly not otherwise," he said.

"Just ordinary, then," said Miss Ada.

"Nothing of the kind," said the Doctor warmly, "anything but ordinary; but rather a blending of the beautiful and the substantial; youth with maturity. I would say that she has a bright mind, judging from her face; manners rather peculiar. I thought her slight until I felt her weight—a hundred and forty, if a pound!"

CHAPTER XVI

Who was this young lady that Doctor De Mar had rescued? Neither Mrs. Hanner nor her daughters, Ada and Inde, were able to guess. The neighborhood was not so populous but that they knew every one for quite a distance around; and if they had guessed every young lady within their knowledge, the right one would have been the last. Inde ran out to interview the man, and returned, radiant.

"Mother, it was Miss Lilian!"

"Miss Lilian Law!" exclaimed Mrs. Hanner. "The idea of Miss Law *tete-a-tete*, with a strange gentleman—impossible!"

"Well, there was not much of a *tete-a-tete* about it, I can assure you," said the Doctor, "for she slipped away as quickly as ever she could. Pray, who can this Miss Law be?"

"She is principal of the High School; and a most charming young lady—among women," said Mrs. Hanner.

"Why among women only, as your remark would imply? Why should she be less popular among the sterner sex? She appeared to be a very charming person, I thought."

"Oh! indeed she is, and would be among men, if she would permit. She has quite a number of admirers; but as soon as that fact becomes apparent, they are dropped. Therefore, she has never excited the envy of her own sex. To know her is to love her."

"She becomes a very interesting personage," said the Doctor, "a kind of *rara avis*, as it were."

He had expected that she would call, or at least write a note of inquiry concerning the mishap that had befallen him in her service. No inquiry came that day, nor the next, nor any other day. He was greatly puzzled.

He decided to dismiss any thought of her from his mind; but like a very great many things, it was easier said than done—the thought would not down at his bidding. While he was as free from conceit as it were possible for any man to be—yet— He had been so universally received; every one had always been kind to him; he had always been courted; he had never been ignored; he could not help a suspicion of pique.

The sprained ankle was as tedious as only a sprained ankle can be; and a week passed before the Doctor could venture out, and then only by the aid of a heavy cane.

On the next Sunday but one he went to church; and it is only truthful to say that there was a lurking expectation of seeing Miss Law there that prompted him to make the effort. He had his reward—to an extent. It is to be feared that he lost most of the service in letting his thoughts follow his eyes in her direction, though it is doubtful if he would have been willing to admit this on the most conscientious introspection. It is equally doubtful if he would have admitted that there lingered the slightest wish that he might be able to catch a glance from her brown eyes. However that might have been, though he gave himself ample time, on account of his limp-

ing limb, to pass out, he did so without her vouchsafing any sign that could have been construed into any knowledge on her part that he existed upon the face of the earth. Did he care? No, why should he? What was she to him? Nothing in the slightest—nothing in the slightest—certainly not! How absurd—how perfectly absurd!

One so tires of people who are like so many pins in a row—most of them are like that. True, some are large pins, while others are small; some white and some black; some brass or worse; but now and then there are others which are pure gold; and these are worth the study. Why should he *not* make a study of this rather peculiar young lady? She is out of the ordinary, certainly. It would at least help to while away the time. Of course, he had no idea of paying her any marked attention, nor of making any impression, further than to cultivate her friendship; he would have that clearly understood from the start. Thus he communed with himself as he drove home that Sunday morning.

Day by day, Doctor De Mar was taking more interest in life. Fishing, hunting, and taking long rides through the lanes were nice enough in their way—yet! The Doctor began to take an interest in gardening. He found entertainment in working among the flowers, in gathering dainty bouquets for the breakfast table. There was an unoccupied corner that could be brought into use; would Mrs. Hanner care if he took it in hand? Most certainly not; he could do as he liked with it. The next morning the early risers saw the Doctor, with his coat off, hard at work in the new corner. He had

decided to take the corner as a morning constitutional; but he soon discovered that he was not playing with Carolina's light, fertile soil. The ground was hard and full of stones; and he found that if only a half hour each morning were devoted to it, the summer would be gone before the corner could be brought into a proper condition for cultivation. The passers-by, the second morning, were astonished to see "Poor slave Dick," with coat off, in darky slang—"making the spade talk." Although Dick had been resident in the village for four or five years, this was the first stroke of work he had ever been known to do.

From Tuesday to Friday night Dick worked faithfully. Two or three times he had tried to anticipate his wages. No, his employer thought not. "Wait until Friday night, Dick, and have your wages in a lump; you need not work on Saturday." Often he stopped, leaned upon his spade handle, and looked longingly toward the village; but his employer was on the look-out on such occasions, and would encourage him to stick to his job, which he did, and received a crisp five-dollar bill for his work. Thanking the Doctor, he grinned a tickled darky's broad grin, and said,

"Boss, ain't yer fum de Souf?"

"Yes, Dick; why do you ask?" said the Doctor.

Roaring with laughter and slapping his hands, Dick said,

"I jes' knowed yer wuz; yer knows how ter manage niggers. Dese folks here mighty nice folks," and Dick's voice sank to a decided undertone, "but dey don't know how ter manage niggers—dey calls

us cullerd gintlemen. It's de blessed truf. I's bin here ergwine on five year, an' dis is de fust lick uv work I's done. Dey has been mighty nice ter me, shore; but dis is de sweetest money I's had fur many er day. 'Thank yer, boss.'

"When you want some more work, come around and I will give you a job," said the Doctor.

"Shore, boss, shore! I'll come any time yer wants me," and Dick was gone.

It is not to be supposed that the corner, interesting as it was, engrossed all of the Doctor's thoughts. Whenever Miss Law's name was mentioned he was all attention; and when he could manage to introduce an interrogation leading up to it, that would not evince too much interest, he was quick to avail himself of the opportunity. It is needless to say that he lost no opportunity of meeting the young lady. He cultivated the rector of the church, who was her cousin, and with whom she boarded; but when invited to the rectory, scant opportunities were offered to improve his acquaintance with this coy young lady; for while she was never rude in the slightest degree, it was evident that she kept out of the way when she could do so short of being actually discourteous.

The Doctor discovered that little Inde was quite a favorite with Miss Law. He would pin dainty little knots of flowers on the child's shoulder as she started to school every morning; and how delighted he would be, when Inde came home from school and he would ask what she did with her flowers, the child would say that she had given them to Miss Law. The Doctor would kiss the child for the

child's sake—and possibly for the teacher's. One day, when the garden was yielding its choicest flowers, a beautiful bouquet was gathered and tastefully arranged and given to Inde.

"Say that I sent them to Miss Law; but give them when alone with her."

That afternoon Inde was intercepted on her way from school; and with a suspicious fluttering of the heart, he asked if she had given the flowers as requested.

"Yes," was the reply.

"What did she say?" asked the Doctor.

"Nothing."

"What did she do with them?"

"She put them in water until she was ready to go home; then she pinned them on her bosom."

Upon what tiny crumbs a hungry heart will feed!

If the Doctor had asked himself, "Jack, what does this mean? Are you at last caught in love's toils? You who have never known what it is to love; you who have always been so positive that you would never marry; say, Jack, is this love?" he would have laughed at the idea. In love? Of course not. He was whiling away time, getting ready to go home. Incidentally, he had found it interesting to study an unusual character. There could be no danger to Miss Law; was she not proof against men? Every one said so, and they ought to know. For the world he would not trifle with her feelings. She was different from other ladies he had met. She was different from any one of whom he had read or heard; and he was interested in this new specimen of the genus woman!

In love? No. In love? Of course not. Well, we'll see.

CHAPTER XVII

The old family physician has just passed out, drawing his long gauntlet gloves over hands that had ministered to the sick and dying for years and years—hands as gentle as a girl's in soothing an aching brow; firm as steel when of necessity wielding the cruel merciful knife. With head bowed, and his long silver locks hanging dejectedly over his sunburned, weather-beaten neck. His step was slow, and gave token of the care and despair that was in his heart. Through weeks of weary watching he had done his best, which was as good as mortal man could do—all without avail.

Within, a large bed-chamber, low ceiled, tastefully furnished, a few, and only a few, of those dainty bric-a-brac which bespeak a refined taste in the mistress. Additional rugs had been thrown over the hard-finished floors to deaden the footsteps of the attendants. On a couch drawn out into the middle of the room lay a wan, weak, dying mother, whose features were pinched with pain and suffering, not all of which was physical. On one side of the couch knelt a male figure, the husband and father, his face buried in his hands. On the other side knelt a girl, tall and spare, with all the grace of her teens yet upon her, unutterable distress stamped upon every feature. Tears had been denied those large, lustrous eyes. Anon she stroked and kissed the pale thin hands of the suffering, dying mother; and when not thus caressed, they were clasped between her own and pressed to her sorrowing, de-

sponding heart. Near the foot of the couch a boy of eight years sat stroking the fine fur of a cat that had curled up in his lap, purring soft and low. The stroking was only intermitted to wipe away the fast falling tears. When the cat would attempt to play with his moving hand, he would smile while he cried—so lightly sits sorrow on a child's heart; and 'tis God's mercy that 'tis so!

The clock in the hall, in its soft, cathedral tone, tolled the half hour, when the kneeling girl arose and brought from a stand a bottle and spoon.

"It is time for your drops, mother." But she, who had been so patient and good, shook her head,

"No, daughter, there is no use."

"Yes, mother, the doctor said that you were to have the drops every half hour. You have been so good all this time. Take this—you must take it."

Turning her head, and glancing around the room, she asked, "Where is the doctor?"

"He has just gone to see the man who was hurt at the mill, but he said that he would soon return. Do you wish to see him now? I will send for him at once; he will come, I know, if you wish to see him."

"No, dear, do not disturb him; let him go where he can do some good; he has been so faithful to me. I have taken up so much of his time; I simply missed him."

Again the daughter insisted on her taking the drops, but she more positively refused than before. The daughter was just turning away, more to hide her distress than in the abandonment of giving the

medicine, when the dying woman held out her hand, saying,

"Give it to me, daughter, it may give me strength to say what I wish to tell you. If your father will take Bennie out on the veranda for a while." Her husband arose, and leaning over kissed her pale, damp brow—a long, loving kiss, and taking his son's hand led him out of the room. The mother then seized the medicine, and asking the daughter to double the dose, she eagerly drank it.

"Come nearer, my dear child. The time has come when I must speak plainly to you. Oh, how much I wish that I could spare you the pain of it!"

Anticipating the tenor of her mother's thoughts, the girl said,

"Mother, dear, do not distress yourself now. Wait until you are better and then—"

"No, dear, there is no other time. My poor, dear child, you will have a hard, hard time,—a hard life,—and although I know what it will be to you, I want you to promise me on my dying bed that you will take care of your brother. Your father will soon follow me."

"Why, mother, father is well and strong; he is rarely ever ill."

"Your father will join me before twelve months are gone."

"Try and compose yourself, mother, and get some rest. You will feel better then."

"No, my dear, I must say what I have to say now—nay, nay, dear, I know that I am dying; and I know that your father will soon join me. You need not ask why, you would not understand—no

one could understand. Promise me that you will take care of your brother. I know that it is a hard thing to ask of a slip of a girl left alone in the world."

"Yes, mother, I promise you before Heaven that I will take care of him as long as we two shall live; and that nothing shall part us while he needs me."

Poor child, if she had known what suffering and distress this sacred promise would bring, not only to herself, but to others, whom she would learn to love beyond everything else in this world, she would have made it all the same!

"I thank you, my dear child; I know that you will keep it. Do not tell any one."

"I will not, mother."

Clasping the poor, thin hands between her own, the girl sank to her knees beside the couch, and the tears that had been denied her before flowed freely now. A tremor of the hand she held attracted her attention, and when she looked up she was shocked by the change that had come over her mother's face.

"Bring your father and brother—quickly."

The girl hastened to find and bring them to her. As they approached they saw her arms stretched out toward them. She took the hand of each and pressed them with all the strength she could command; but spoke never a word—she was dead.

It is to be doubted if very many of my readers could form any idea of what the burden was like that fell upon Lilian's young shoulders, inexperienced and alone in the world, with a heart-broken father and a little brother to care for. Day and night she watched and tended. She would not trust

to the servants, and probably it was well that it was so; for within a month her father's partner decamped with all the available assets of the concern and fled to Canada. On looking more closely into his affairs, Mr. Law found that his partner had taken advantage of his absence from the office, while in attendance upon his sick wife, and had raised all the money possible on their real estate, forging his name to the papers. As an honorable man, there was nothing to do but give up his private means to his creditors. He turned over everything to them. However, his property came so near paying every debt that, moved to pity for him in his distress, they allowed him to keep his home; aside from that, he had absolutely nothing. Bravely did he battle with the world; but nothing prospered; and within a year he succumbed and was laid to rest beside his wife.

God had not left the daughter without friends. Offers of assistance came from many to take the child off her hands, as well as offers of homes for herself. To all of which the same answer was given,

"I appreciate all this kindness, and I am as grateful as I can be for it; but I must keep Bennie with me; we must not be separated. I must take care of him."

In vain they endeavored to show her how much better it would be for her brother as well as for herself; and how utterly impossible it would be for her alone to provide for their wants. Then the good old rector came to use his influence after all the others had failed. "Did she realize what she was

refusing? Good homes for both of them, where they would be well cared for; and how hard, nay, impossible for her to battle with the world; to care for the two of them? Did she realize that her father had been unable to leave them anything save the home?"

"Yes, I know it all; but God will help me. I must keep the child."

All arguments failing, he left her alone, after having extracted the promise that she would come to him when she needed assistance.

The following day she was visited by the selectmen of the village in a body. She met them with the dignity of a veteran, and conducted them to the sitting-room, and bade them be seated. Then Esquire Gumpy, who was the chairman of the board—a bulky, over-fed specimen of humanity—in a very pompous and impressive manner said,

"I presume that this is Miss Law—Miss Lilian Law?"

"Yes, that is my name."

"Well, Miss Law—that is to say, Miss Lilian Law, it has come to the notice of the board of selectmen of this town—ahem—we are the selectmen; as I was saying,—it has come to the notice of the board of selectmen of this town, that your father has left you and a little brother; am I correct in saying brother?"

"You are."

"Ah! as I was saying, when you interrupted me, left you and a little brother—ahem—without any visible means of support."

Here he stopped and looked out of the corners of

his eyes at the poor child, to see what effect his pomposity was having on her. She was sitting demurely looking him squarely in the face; and to an outsider looked as if she was standing it amazingly well for a slip of a girl. He resumed,

“Remember, Miss, *we*—are the selectmen of this town”; and after a pause, he cleared his throat in a noisy way and proceeded, “As I, the chairman of the board, have said, without any visible means of support. We, the board, are further informed that you have had a number of good offers, by thoroughly responsible parties, to take care of you both, to all and singular of which you have seen fit to turn a deaf ear. Have we, the board of selectmen, been correctly informed, Miss?”

“You have.”

“Ahem—and do you still persist in that determination—ahem—if a mere girl can be said to have determination?”

“I do,” came with a directness and decision that was rather disconcerting to this august chairman—Esquire Gumpy. However, he was feeling too secure in his position to be withstood by a slip of a girl.

“Miss Law—or more correctly speaking—Miss Lilian Law, you must try and not forget that we are the selectmen of this town, and are here in our official capacity, and that we will not brook any levity or show of disrespect to this board, and especially toward its chairman, which I am. Ahem—I will inform you that we, the selectmen, have certain rights and powers vested in us by the charter of the said town, under the great seal of the State of

New York, which rights and powers every citizen of this town is bound to respect. And while you are but a girl, let me inform you, that you are a citizen of the town, and are just as much bound by its laws, rules, and usages as if you were the most influential man in the town—or, as myself for instance; you are not to forget this fact, Miss.” Here he paused and looked at her over the big brass frames of his glasses.

“I will try not to,” came the quiet answer.

“Ah, that sounds more respectful, and we will try and not be too hard on you. Nevertheless, it is my duty to say to you, that as the custodians of the revenues collected for the maintenance of this town, we do not propose to have the town burdened by paupers who are too lazy to work, and too proud to accept aid from their friends. I hope that I am making myself clear to your comprehension, Miss.” He had not long to wait for an answer to this unkind and uncalled-for speech. She straightened herself up, and looking Esquire Gumpy in the eye, her face aflame with indignation, replied,

“Sir, I am but a young girl, and know but little of the ways of the world; but does it not strike you, with your superior wisdom and knowledge of affairs, that if I am too proud to accept assistance from my dear friends, that I would be likely to accept it from the selectmen of this town? Are you not also a little hasty, in judging me as being too lazy to work, until I shall have had an opportunity of working? And will it not be ample time for the selectmen to refuse me when I shall apply to them for aid?”

After catching his breath, he turned to his brethren and said,

"Gentlemen, what have you got to say to this pert girl?"

Mr. Waxend, the smallest man on the board, who was sitting on the edge of a chair near the door, said in a very high-pitched voice,

"Mr. Chairman, if I be allowed to give my opinion in this case, I be very much disposed to think that the young Miss has the best of you; and that, until we are called upon to aid her, we had better let her be."

The esquire was not disposed to be downed in any such summary way by a mere slip of a girl, nor by Mr. Waxend's advice, and was about to begin a discussion of the case, when the girl arose and said,

"You can discuss this without my presence; and if you will be so kind as to close the front door when you leave the house, I will bid you good-morning." With a dignified inclination of her head to them, she left the room, to their utter amazement.

Esquire Gumpy and his board of selectmen were not slow to follow her example; and remembering her prudent request, carefully closed the front door after them, and returned to their office to discuss the girl's "impudence" at their leisure.

It was soon noised abroad that the selectmen had visited Miss Law; her friends knowing the caliber of the men, and the loneliness of the poor girl, hastened to see her, and tried to comfort her. Nothing was said about the selectmen's visit; but gently and in a motherly way they renewed their offers of assistance.

"My dear," said one of them,—it was Mrs. Han-ner,—“are you not making a mistake in not accepting aid from your friends, who are able, and more than willing, to help you?”

“I shall be only too glad to accept your kind offer,” she replied to this, “if you will help me to help myself. I cannot give up my brother; but as you know, I have had rather good opportunities to improve myself. I had intended teaching sooner or later, and have prepared myself with that end in view. If you ladies will assist me in getting a small school, that will support us ever so modestly, and give me a chance to demonstrate whether I am competent or not, I would take it as a great kindness, and be under lasting obligations to you.”

Miss Law's idea was adopted on the spot. Twenty children were soon pledged. The girl's pluck and energy and firmness of purpose could but be admired, and gave the best guarantee of success that could have been offered. Her pupils came from the better class, children that had been well trained at home, and from families that were able to pay her promptly, who, in fact, insisted on advancing her first month's salary so that she would be able to secure a proper person to keep house for her.

From that time on, Miss Law went in and out, discharging her duties religiously, and giving entire satisfaction to her patrons, at the same time winning the hearts of the children. She was a model of propriety. The school was a decided success, and Miss Law had frequent applications to take positions in other institutions of learning. While she had been

faithful to her pupils, she had found time to improve herself.

She was soon sought socially, as she was an acquisition to any party. She was greatly admired by all who came in contact with her. Her form had filled out, producing a graceful carriage. Such acquirements and such attractions were not overlooked by the young men of the place.

Time wore on; the brave young woman pursued the even tenor of her way. One by one her pupils were sent to college, where they took advanced positions; among them was her brother, who entered Yale's sophomore class. The additional expense demanded a stricter economy. The offer of assistance was always declined with thanks. "We are getting on—we will manage," was her reply.

However, Bennie had not been at Yale a great while before he developed some expensive habits, which were causing his sister much anxiety. And just at this juncture, when this trial was bearing heavily upon her mind, another trouble developed.

CHAPTER XVIII

It was on a fine Saturday morning. Miss Law had just finished a letter, covering a remittance to her brother. She had laid the whole matter before him, telling him that he must not run into debt, or incur unnecessary expenses. Knowing how well the boy loved her, and was usually very considerate of her comfort, she had told him plainly in this letter that she would be forced to take additional students to be able to meet his increasing expenses, and therefore would be obliged to redouble her exertions. She had never before put it so forcibly to him, and she felt that this would have a restraining effect on him. Though it cost her dearly to pain her brother in the slightest degree, she felt that she was doing her duty to him; for it would be most unfortunate to be forced to withdraw him from college before he should finish his course.

The young lady sat on the steps of the veranda enjoying the bright beautiful morning, waiting for the postman to pass by, toying with her letter, sealed and stamped, covering the needed check. The carrier was late, and she was still waiting for him, when she saw a figure approach the gate and stop, peering in at her in an undecided way; evidently a mendicant from his shabby garb and general appearance of impecuniosity. While the man fumbled at the gate latch, she was feeling for her purse. She had never turned a deaf ear to a call for help, preferring to be imposed upon scores of times rather than allow one worthy object to go unaided. As he

approached her, her ever keen perceptions noticed that his face, hard and pinched as it was, was wanting in the unmistakable look of the beggar class. He came within a few feet of her without speaking. He gazed around at the premises and then let his eyes rest on her, his face working—working in that painful way peculiar to persons who stammer. Stammer, however, he did not when he spoke; but in a high nasal tone said,

“Is this the place where Obed Law used to live?”

“It is,” she answered.

Again his eyes wandered around the place, and then fixed themselves upon her face.

“Be you his daughter that I have heard so much about?” he said.

“I am his daughter, whatever you may have heard,” was her reply.

“Well,” said the man, his voice pitched several keys higher than his previous tone, “I be Jeddediah Hardsly, ferninst West Brampton, and I be come to see you.”

In vain she racked her memory to recall the name or face. She would not fail of hospitality, yet there was something out of the ordinary in the man’s expression that excited her suspicions. She compromised the matter, and offered him a chair upon the veranda. He came in but declined the chair, nor did he remove his hat from his head. He took every opportunity to peer into the house. To break the silence she said,

“Really, you must pardon me; I am unable to recall any remembrance of you. Did you know my father?”

"Unfortunately, yes," was his reply.

"I am at a loss to understand; will you be so kind as to explain?"

"Hain't these rags enough to explain?" and he extended his arms to display his frazzled coat sleeves. "Don't these patches on my trousers tell you plain enough?" and he extended first one leg and then the other. "Ain't these soleless shoes got tongues to tell the tale?" Repeating, "Ragged, sleeveless, and soleless," he chuckled softly in a strange kind of way.

Miss Law began to grow nervous; was the man demented? He certainly spoke and acted in a way calculated to lead one to that conclusion. Usually there was some one passing in the street. Her pre-occupation had prevented her seeing the postman when he passed some moments ago. She could perceive no one now in sight, and this fact added to her uneasiness. She must get rid of him.

"I am very sorry for your misfortune, and grieve that I am not in a position to relieve your necessities entirely. What little money I have, I will give you; you ought to get more substantial assistance from the board of charities," and she handed him some change. He gazed long and wistfully at the money; but he shook his head and refused to touch it. He said,

"These don't be all the tatters and rags, nor all the patches, nor all the soleless shoes—where they have any shoes at all. There be my wife in rags and tatters, and there be five little children that's got more of them. I didn't come here begging. I want my own, and with interest; nor I ain't going away

until I get it. Now I guess you ain't at a loss to understand; I don't see how I could make it any plainer."

Now Miss Law had become really alarmed; there was no one in sight, but if the man were really demented, it would not do to let him see that she was frightened. In her nervousness she dropped her letter, which accident gave her a hint of which she was not slow to avail herself.

"I have forgotten to mail my letter, which I was waiting to do when you came; and as I wish it to go by this post, I must ask you to excuse me."

But the man made no move to go, nor did he show any disposition to do so, though Miss Law had arisen from her chair and moved toward the steps of the veranda. Noticing this, she said,

"If you are going in that direction, I can show you where some of the board are to be found, and they will be able to assist you."

Still he did not move, though she had descended the steps and had started toward the gate.

"Will you not come with me?" she asked.

"No, if you must go, I will wait until you come back. I told you that I was not going to leave here until I got my rights, and I ain't."

She was not slow in making up her mind. As much as she disliked the idea of going away and leaving him at her house, there was nothing else for her to do. She would hurry and find an officer and give him in charge. She had reached the gate, when she recalled the fact that he had said he had been unfortunate in knowing her father; what could he

have meant? All fear was gone in an instant and she returned.

"Be seated, good man, and tell me—"

"I ben't no good man. All that has been rubbed out of me, by the same thing that rubbed these holes and tatters in my clothes. I ben't good, and you needn't trouble to call me so."

"I beg your pardon then. Will you not be seated and tell me what the trouble is? In what way have we injured you? You speak in riddles."

The last word seemed to catch his ear more forcibly than anything else she had said.

"Riddles is the very word. Me and all that I have has been riddled by you."

"Will you not please explain your meaning? Surely I have not injured you; how could I possibly have done so?"

"By doing just as you have; by keeping me out of my rights; by letting me and mine starve while you have lived in wealth and luxury."

"I will ask you again to explain yourself; if there really is anything to explain. I assure you that I do not understand in what way I have injured you or yours."

"You are very innocent, you are. Don't you know that your father borrowed the last dollar in the world that I had, and never paid one cent of it back? I was sick and my wife was sick, and neither of us could attend to business; and we just lent our money to your father, and the next thing we heard was that he was dead and all his property gone, except what you have kept back; and left us to starve."

Miss Law had made several fruitless efforts to stop him. When he had got to going there was no hushing him. All their sufferings seemed to rush over him afresh and master him; he could not have stopped if he had wished to do so. Finally, from sheer exhaustion he grew silent, and wiped the perspiration from his face. His pause was seized by Miss Law to say,

“My dear sir, believe me, I pray you, this is all news to me. My father never knowingly or willingly wronged any one; and—”

“He was mighty willing to borrow my money and never pay it back.”

“Doubtless, he was willing to borrow your money; and he expected to repay it with interest. It may be that while I was in ignorance of your condition, you have been ignorant of the condition of things here. My father’s partner ran away, carrying everything available with him, mortgaging everything else, taking advantage of my father’s absence from the office, while my mother was on her death-bed. The loss of my mother and all his property broke my father down; and he too died, leaving my little brother to my care, without one penny of money; for he gave up everything to his creditors, and I cannot understand why you did not share with the others in the distribution of the property. Notice was given to all creditors to come forward and establish their claims. At a meeting of the creditors the property which father turned in so nearly paid every debt, they would not let the house be sold from over our heads, and they gave it to me. By my unaided efforts I have supported my brother

and myself. We have nothing but this house. It was not given me by my father, nor have I kept it back from you; and if your claim is a just one, I will see that you are paid. I am only too sorry that I am unable to help you immediately." The letter again dropped from her hand and gave her another suggestion—the check. In an instant the letter was torn open and the check removed. She hastened into the house and countersigned it to Jeddediah Hardsly. Returning, she handed it to him, saying as she did so,

"Here is a check for fifty dollars, which I was sending to my brother who is off at school. You can get it cashed at the bank, and that will relieve your present necessities until I can look into the matter."

He took the money without a word of thanks, and left with the simple remark,

"I'll be back."

The sunshine had gone out of the beautiful morning for Miss Law. Had she acted too hastily? She had given fifty dollars to a perfect stranger upon his say so. It was impossible for her to settle down to anything. She went to her own room and closed the door. What transpired within that sacred precinct? What did she think? What did she feel? To those who have really suffered—who have had to face some of life's most trying ordeals alone—it may safely be left to the imagination. Those who have had no experience could not appreciate it if they saw and knew what was transpiring behind the closed door.

At luncheon she came down and joined the house-

keeper. Little was said by either; the faithful old woman's discretion was equal to her years, knowing when to talk and when to keep silent. Having finished the repast, Miss Law busied herself around the house for an hour or two; then she dressed herself in her usual neat style, and went to see Mrs. Hanner, with whom she had a long talk over the occurrences of the morning. She had made up her mind as to her line of conduct; nevertheless, she felt that it was but right to talk it over with her friends.

"Yes, Mrs. Hanner, while I am morally sure that the man told me the truth, of course I cannot be certain. I will consult Mr. Summet, and have him look into the matter and see if the debt is real and just, and what steps are necessary to turn the house over to Mr. Hardsly; or whether it would be better to sell it and pay him the cash."

Mr. Summet gave it his attention at once, as requested by Miss Law. He found it true as the man had stated. He had loaned two thousand dollars to the firm, with no other security than their bond. He found also that, in some unaccountable way, no notice had been served on him to attend the meeting of the creditors, nor had he shared with the others in the general distribution of the assets of the firm, nor in the distribution of the individual relinquishment of the homestead on the part of Mr. Law before his death.

"But," said the lawyer, "he has no claim upon you, or the property which the creditors gave you. Your father had nothing to do with that transaction; he had turned the house over to them with its

contents; it was no longer his or under his control in any way. You acted too hastily in giving him the money you did. When he returns, send him over to me and I will set him right about it, and I will see that he does not annoy you any more."

"I have no doubt, Mr. Summet, that you are legally correct; but in equity I think he is entitled to his money. What do you consider the house and furniture worth? I have not the slightest idea whether the house alone ought to realize enough to satisfy the claim or whether it will require the furniture also."

"The principal and interest will run the debt up in the neighborhood of twenty-three hundred dollars. The house and lot will bring that much if not more."

"Will you dispose of them at once for me?" she asked.

"There will be no trouble about that, if you are determined to part with the property. But property in that part of the town is advancing in value; and if you would make some arrangement to keep it a few years, it would pay you handsomely to do so. You would have no trouble in raising the money you seem to think you need on it, at an easy interest."

"No, Mr. Summet, there are especial reasons why I do not wish to carry a debt," said Miss Law.

So it was arranged; and within a few days the house and lot were disposed of for a sum sufficient to satisfy this debt, and leave several hundred dollars to Miss Law's credit.

It was a sad day when the old home was given

up; however, the pain was greatly palliated by the thought that she had done her duty to herself, to her brother, and—what gave the greatest satisfaction—to her father's memory. The furniture was removed to a house nearer the center of the town, one more convenient in every way, so the school did not suffer by the change.

With many other things, quite as interesting to Doctor De Mar, this was what he learned about Miss Law.

CHAPTER XIX

Mrs. Hanner put two and two together. She soon found that there was no surer way of entertaining her boarder than in speaking of Miss Law. The summer wore away. The daintiest flowers that the Doctor could grow or procure found their way to this young lady. Occasionally he would shake himself together and realize that he was making a kid of himself; then he would blush to the roots of his hair—but this was only transitory. Again, he found himself hopelessly lost in the dream; as utterly helpless as an autumn leaf in mid-ocean, tossed by every wavelet and whipped by every breeze that blew. And yet—how sweet it all was, this novel sensation. Used to being courted and sought after; now almost, if not really shunned, by the only woman who had caught his fancy. More than once he had resolved to pack his kit and dismiss the whole matter from his mind, and go back to his peaceful Southern home. This, too, was only transitory, and again he was bound hand and foot—the slave of his infatuation.

At last he was forced to admit to himself that this was *love*. Love pure, true love. “Who can define it?” he asked himself. The answer came back, “Have not poets from time immemorial essayed the task? Their sweetest numbers have borne its earmarks; and the fancies of their quickest genius have set it forth, decked in the choicest flowers of which their language was capable; no adjectives were too extravagant; none too soft or tender; none too

endearing; and at last, have felt how impotent all their efforts were, how fruitless all language was to give expression to what the heart in love would want to say.

"The philosopher bends his mind to grasp its subtle meaning, only to find it a fickle goddess, refusing to be measured by rule or weighed by analysis; in its force swaying the world; in its pliancy yielding to force, only to have its own sweet will at last. In reasoning from cause to effect as philosopher, he sees the impress of its cat-like tread on the hardest, and most obdurate realities; moulding the destinies of men and nations; dominating the Universe! It makes the simple wise; the wise foolish. It disarms the strong; it strengthens the weak. The most homely are made beautiful; and for the beautiful, it answers the problem of painting the lily of the field. It gives eyes to the blind; it blinds the most far-seeing. It tones down the rough and uncouth; the gentle and lovable it canonizes."

Doctor De Mar when he had heard this answer, raised his head from its thoughtful pose. He looked aloft and asked, "Why should I blush to own its gentle reign? King and serf—philosopher and fool—rich and poor—high and low—have yielded to its matchless power! I will win her! I will win her!"

The long-looked-for end of the term came at last. There was to be, as was customary, an entertainment at its close. Ada said to the Doctor that he must be sure to attend. He protested that he had not been invited.

"The public is invited. That is broad enough for you, is it not?" said the girl.

"I am not so sure of that," he said.

"Then I invite you. Shall I write it, or shall I have it engraved?"

"Thanks, very much. I suspect that you and Inde would be the only ones to miss me, if I did not go."

"Not at all, the teachers would miss you; I know they would like to have you come."

The child became confused and ran away. Why should she have been confused? The Doctor noticed the fact, and his fancy wove many a possibility from so flimsy a material, with the result that he devoted unwonted attention to his toilet that evening, and joined the family at the entertainment.

There was music, there were essays and various exercises. The young people acquitted themselves remarkably well, showing the result of admirable training. The first assistant—a young gentleman—was master of ceremonies, the principal keeping well in the background, much to the Doctor's disappointment.

The program having been concluded, refreshments were served. The Doctor was keeping on the outskirts of the crowd. He was startled to hear his name pronounced in a very low, sweet voice. Turning, he was face to face with Miss Law, who extended her hand in the friendliest kind of way possible.

"Doctor De Mar, good-evening; I am glad to see you," she said.

"In that event the pleasure is mutual," said the

Doctor, "at least in kind; I fear I may not hope, in degree."

"We are having some refreshments; will you permit me to do the honors?" was what she hastened to say. She took his arm, and they found an unoccupied table well to one side, where they had a pleasant chat while they discussed the sweets; but there was nothing half so sweet to him as the sound of her voice. All too soon for him, he had to relinquish her to attend to some duties incident to her position as principal.

When the time came for going home he threaded his way through the throng toward her, to say good-night. He had intended to throw a good deal into that leave-taking. She must have divined his intentions; for while she said good-night in the most charming way, she did it so quickly that he did not have time to utter anything but the most commonplace things to her, before she was saying good-bys to others. This was quite a disappointment to him; but certainly she was disposed to make herself agreeable to him. And now that her school duties were at an end, he would have an opportunity of cultivating her friendship, which he would certainly do. With these thoughts engaging his mind, and the pleasant occupation of recalling every word that she had said, each soft inflection of voice, and every little mannerism, he found his way home, pretty thoroughly elated. Then came the reaction; how stupid he had been; there was so much he ought to have said, and did not say, in those brief moments; but he had been taken so much by surprise, that he was miserably disconcerted, when with any one else

he would have been at his ease. How provoking! How often he had been complimented on being able to say the right thing, at the right time, and in the right way; and now, when he was most anxious to appear to the best advantage, that he should have been so gauche, was altogether too bad. He found himself living over and over again their brief interview. How charming her manner—so simple, yet so perfect! While there was nothing frivolous, there was nothing pedantic. She discussed things and ideas in a most charming manner; and as he recalled it, found much food for thought. Even the common-place things were dressed in a new garb, that made them fresh and highly pleasing. Reflecting in this way, he passed off into the realms of unconsciousness, only to dream the fancies of his mind, that were too ethereal for waking thoughts.

High noon the next day found Dick—of late the Doctor's factotum—on his way to the rectory with the following note:

"My dear Miss Law:

"I am aware that it is the refinement of selfishness to ask it—you must be greatly fatigued—but I cannot help asking, if I may call to see you this evening? If you are too tired this evening to receive company, will you name the earliest date when I may come?"

Yours truly,

"JACK DE MAR."

Impatiently he waited Dick's return. He began to amuse himself in the flower garden, gulling flow-

ers for the evening. This and that one was discarded, others were gathered. His taste had become hypercritical. One was somewhat misshapen; another's color was not true. It was a most difficult thing to get a sufficient number that were satisfactory. After so long a time, he partially succeeded in getting enough that were up to his standard. Then came the arrangement of them to suit his fastidious taste; this and that and the other combinations were tried. This pleasing task finally accomplished, they were carefully placed in water to await the evening. Another task now presented itself—crowds of thoughts and ideas were arranged and rearranged for ready use. There was so much that he wanted to say; so much that he did not want to leave unsaid. Then he waited with what patience he could command. All waiting comes to an end, and Dick came sauntering down the lane. There was a note in his hand. "How slow the rascal walks!" thought the Doctor; but the most casual glance told him that it was not Miss Law's handwriting. It was from Mrs. Twedon, the rector's wife, saying that Miss Law had that morning gone to visit some friends in the mountains for an indefinite period. Expressing regrets and so forth, she would forward his note. "Well—"

The fishing was not nearly so satisfactory; the shooting had fallen off until it was not worth considering; the roads were dust beds; the lanes were insupportably dull; the flowers bloomed not half so blithely; the birds were moulting, hopping about the trees in a listless kind of way—singing no more.

The sun lay blistering on it all, drying the sap out of everything living. Save the clatter of the katydids, the nights were sepulchral. Mrs. Hanner—say it softly!—had become prosaic. Ada and Inde were simply nuisances. Life? There was no life! How could there have ever been any life at Hazelhurst? Bah!

Doctor De Mar paid a month's board, packed his kit, and was gone.

Did he say *au revoir*?

CHAPTER XX

It was on a sultry day in September when the boat stopped at the De Mar landing. No one was there to meet Doctor De Mar, as no one was expecting him home on that day; he was glad of it. As he stepped from the gang-plank he felt as if his arrival was something of a surprise to himself. Everything looked strange and changed, yet, there stood the same old boat-house just as he had left it; the same old hitching-posts, with the agent's little brown mule hitched just where he had always seen him. Things had changed; yet, there flowed the same beautiful waters of the broad Oconee. There came the same old man with his bills of lading tucked under his arm, dressed to a dot just as he had seen him last. That must be the same cob pipe he was smoking then.

Everything seemed so quiet and still. The green of the trees had not been touched with frost yet, and he contrasted them with the fading leaves he had left behind; and that suggested the two bright brown eyes that were possibly now looking at those fading, frost-touched leaves. But that is all passed now; he would not allow himself to think of it any more—that was but a mad, foolish dream.

He would go home quietly and rest before any one would know of his return. Old man Sikes had said good-morning to him as though he had seen him yesterday, as he passed into the cramped quarters of his office to check off the freight; he would never think of saying anything about his return. It was

not far, and the Doctor set out to walk home. During his ramblings he had become accustomed to that form of exercise. He paused here and there, taking in many familiar scenes. How glad he was to be back; and how sad he was, as his brother's memory would come and walk beside him! There was not a step, not a tree, nor bush that he could dissociate from him; and there came also, all unbidden, the memory of other scenes; and another form came and stood with them, and he wished they could have known each other.

He must shake off these morbid thoughts; morbid he considered them. His brother could never return to him; the other was to be forgotten, as a silly episode—nothing more nor less. No, he would blot it out. Increasing his pace, he wended his way home. As he drew near he heard the happy darkies singing at their work. The old familiar sound touched his heart, and he found himself taking up the refrain of the well-known darky melody they were singing. He stops and shakes himself when he finds himself wishing if only Miss Law could be there to hear the merry voices down in the cotton-field by the river. Tut, what folly! and he strode on.

He had scarcely arrived in sight of the place, when he heard Uncle Lot call out, "Yonder's Marse Jack!" and like a tornado every negro within the sound of his voice came thundering down to see "Marse Jack," and it was, "Howdy, Marse Jack! Howdy, Marse Jack!" on all sides; until the tears came to blur his sight of their bright, happy, black faces. The older ones came as fast as their years

would let them. All shaking hands with their young master, expressing in their own several ways their delight at seeing him again. When Marm Tilly found her voice, she cried,

"Here's my chile—here's my chile. I's so glad ter see yer one more time 'fore I dies."

She and Uncle Lot reached him about the same time, and each grasped a hand and kissed it over and over again. So touched was the Doctor's heart by this show of attachment that it was some moments before he could trust himself to speak.

"I too am glad to see you all—I am so glad! And it does my heart good to find that you really missed me while away."

"Missed yer?" said Marm Tilly. "I'd like ter see de nigger on dis place dat ain't glad ter see yer, Marse Jack," and she shook her old white head at the thought of any one not being glad to see her young master.

"I have no doubt, Marm Tilly, but that all are glad to have me back."

"Uv course dey is," said Lot, "we's all pow'ful glad ter see yer. It seems like er mighty long time since—" That last word recalled the time and circumstance of his going; and the kind old darky would spare his young master every memory of those days—he never finished the sentence. A start was made for the house, with Uncle Lot and Aunt Tilly on either side of him, the others swarming along behind.

"How have you been getting on, Uncle Lot?" asked the Doctor, as they neared the house.

"Jes' middlin', Marse Jack, jes' middlin'. Every-

thing has gone all right, an' Mr. McLaughlin at de bank will tell you dat we've done well. Las' year we made over five hundred bags uv cotton, wid er plenty uv pervisions, an' 'spects ter do better'n dat dis year," said Lot.

They had now reached the house, and Marm Tilly rushed off to her department, and was soon deep in the arrangements for a lunch for her young master. In the mean time, the noon bell rang, and it was not long before the field hands were heard coming; and away went some of the boys down the road to tell them that Marse Jack was home. A whoop was given when they heard the news, and here they came pell-mell to greet him; vieing with each other to see who could get to him first. He came out on the veranda to meet them, where they gave him a royal reception. When it was over and he had returned within, the hands began a regular scamper; even the older ones joining in the play—tussling with each other, turning hand-springs, throwing their hats up in the air, and giving expression to their delight in their own lively, innocent way, and again the tears came to the Doctor's eyes as he beheld this exhibition of love and loyalty in these friends—his slaves.

Very soon Robert announced that luncheon was ready; and a very generous lunch it was. Of which, however, the Doctor partook sparingly; for he knew the old woman would prepare a dinner to which he must do ample justice, or she would feel hurt. After a bath and a bit of refreshing sleep, he came down to find dinner just ready for him. When confronted with that table he could but laugh.

There before his plate was placed a twenty-pound turkey and everything else in proportion; there was enough to feed a dozen hungry men. The Doctor ran the risk of making himself ill in order to try and do justice to Marm Tilly's dinner. When the servant removed the remains to the pantry, Marm Tilly said to him,

"Robert, Marse Jack hain't eat nothin'. Did he say hit wuzn't good?"

"No, he jes' laughed when he seed dat great big brown gobbler er lyin' dere on he back, wid he laigs crossed; wid de liver tuck under one wing an' de gizzard under de odder, wid de hard-biled aigs all eroun' im, an' de pa'sly stuck erbout him, an' de cramberries lookin' so red an' purty. Fus' he laughed an' den he sorter clinched he teeth an' he face begin ter wuck, an' he eyes got red, like de cramberries, an' he tuck out he han'ke'chief an' wiped 'em. I wondered ef he felt bad 'cause he couldn't eat it all up."

"Well, I don't miss nuffin' 'cept de liver an' er piece er two uv de white meat, an' jes' er little uv de odder t'ings. But I tole 'im dat yuther time dat I wuzn't ter be cotch er nappin' ergin, like I wuz dat time w'en all dem youngsters come here fur break-fuss, ter try an' eat us out uv house an' home, wid-out lettin' us know nothin' erbout deir comin'; an' I ain't gwine ter nuther. I's got three dozen more gobblers jes' like dat one er savin' fur 'em. I spects there'll be er big crowd uv 'em any time now. Let 'em come, Tilly's ready fur 'em."

After dinner, Uncle Lot came around to know if

he was to send word to Mr. Hal's and Mr. Chatham Jack's folks, and the others, of his arrival.

"No, Uncle Lot, I would like to be quiet for a day or so and rest up; then we will have everybody over for a day." Thus he planned for a few days of rest.

CHAPTER XXI

While the Doctor was at breakfast the next morning, there was the clatter of a horse's feet on the drive, a whirlwind through the hall, and young Dick De Mar ran all over him. What Dick's visit wanted in ceremony was made up for by its heartiness and cheery good-will.

"My dear old boy, I am so glad to see you back," said Dick, as he pulled the Doctor's head back and kissed his forehead again and again.

"Hold on," said the Doctor, "don't strangle me like that."

"But I am so glad to see you," said the young man, "I can't help it."

"That is all right; thanks. Sit down and have some breakfast with me."

"With all my heart; I'll do almost anything to oblige you—I am so glad to see you, indeed I am. Say, how did you manage to slip in and not let anyone know that you were coming? I was going over to Uncle Hal's for breakfast, and just happened to meet one of your people and was told that you had returned. I supposed that I was the only one that had been left out, and that I would find the whole clan here. After I have had my breakfast I will ride around and notify everybody to be here for dinner—if they can wait that long."

"Please do nothing of the kind, Dick. I want a day or two in which to rest and pull myself together. This is Tuesday; say Thursday, and I will be delighted to have you all to dinner. You see, I

am home for good now; and I am going to wake old Sandowns up a bit. We will have some royal good times right along. I have picked up some good ideas abroad and we will exploit them. There is no place on earth like old Carolina. You have no idea how glad I am to be back on her blessed soil one more time. Thursday we will begin."

"All right, if it will be possible for them to wait that long," said Dick.

"It will be all right, if you will be good enough to ride around and tell them how it is. See all of them, and don't forget little Miss Tippers. How you have filled out, Dick! You look quite a man now. Let me congratulate you on having taken *first* at Chapel Hill; you see I have kept posted."

"Thank you, that was all an accident, an accident pure and simple. You see, we were a lot of chumps, the whole batch of us. They do say that it was the heaviest thing the old school had ever known. They had to give it to some one; and I have had it sub rosa, that they drew straws to see who was to have it. When the lot fell on me, the president groaned so loud that Bill Dockery, who was down on the campus, swore he knew now who had taken Miss Cram's green peaches. Honest Indian. That was all there was to it."

"Then, let me congratulate you on your modesty."

"There is not a particle of modesty about it either. It is just a strenuous effort to be exactly truthful, let it cost what it may. Now tell me about yourself, old boy. Have you had a nice time? Did you make any conquests? Tell me all about it, while I

amuse myself with this drumstick of the chicken. Don't be too modest, though I know that it is a family failing with the De Mars."

"Really," began the Doctor, "there is very little to tell; in fact, nothing. There are no countries to discover these days—only the North Pole, and I have not traveled in that direction. Everything has been explored and written up in full. There is no glory in a rehash of the same old tales; and as for the North Pole, the simple thought of that chilled my marrow, and I came home empty-handed."

"And heart-whole, did you say?"

"Heart-whole," said the Doctor.

"Look here, Jack, that did not come out good and strong from your 'stomick'; that was from the lips only. You see, Jack, I have been hit myself and know all the symptoms; you had to stop to swallow before you could answer. Now see, you are blushing like a school-girl. Ho, ho, ho! It takes a thief to catch a thief. I have cornered you; own up like a little man."

"Tut! listen to what foolishness you are perpetrating. You know, Dick, that I am not a marrying man; and you know equally well that I would not be guilty of a flirtation. Now you have had your breakfast, be off, and tell the whole clan that I am at home, and will be delighted to see every one of them on Thursday to dinner, and as much longer as they can find time to give me. I have made up my mind to devote my life to my friends. Ah! excuse me, to whom are you doing the kid act?"

"Can't you guess?"

"No, we have so many pretty cousins that it would be impossible to guess."

"Listen to me, I will not follow your example and fib about it—it is Dell."

"Accept my congratulations; you have made a wise choice, for so green a head. When is it to be?"

"Just been waiting your return. It will be smack off the reel now."

"Then that is the reason that you are so very glad to have me back. Why, when I left home, Dell was still showing the tops of her pretty boots."

"You will see the tops of them no more forever. She has developed into the sweetest and most beautiful woman in the world; and if you do not say so when you see her Thursday, you are an incorrigible old leather-head, is all that I have to say."

"I do not question what you say, Dick; but you know love is as blind as a bat; however, we will not discuss that now. Do two things for me to-day, and then I will listen to your silly ravings for a month, or until you have been married six months. Keep the rabble off me until Thursday, and then bring them as often as you wish, and I will be glad to see them, especially Dell. Now go, there is your horse—good-by," and he pushed Dick off the veranda.

"Say, Jack, did you find travel conducive to hospitality?" and laughing as gaily as a lark, the young fellow mounted his horse and went dashing down the drive, whistling some air caught from his sweetheart's rosy lips. This good old world lay open before him, bright and beautiful, not a cloud the size of a man's hand to obscure one jot of it.

Now and then as he went, he wrenched his mind from pleasanter thought to say,

"Poor old Jack! There is something wrong with the dear old boy—he can't fool me"; and he said as much to Dell that very afternoon, as they sauntered down the pasture lane, gathering wild flowers—they two—alone. And together they were sorry for him, as it were possible for two thoroughly happy youngsters to be; and they agreed to keep his secret for him.

The two days of respite was something of a relief to the Doctor, and he enjoyed them to the full. The first day he sauntered about the home-place, inspecting the stables and grounds. He found the horses had been well cared for, having been exercised daily under Lot's immediate supervision. But often during the day he found his mind wandering back beyond the Potomac. He would instantly thrust such thoughts from his mind, in spite of the pain it cost. Most emphatically, it belonged to the past.

The next day he would give to the nearby places; but when the morning came, and he had ordered his horse, he saw a little phaeton coming through the gate. He hurried out to meet Little Miss Tippers.

"I am so glad to see you, my dear friend. I am delighted to see you; come in. Shall we not sit on the veranda?"

"Yes, it looks so cool and inviting. How have you been, Doctor?"

"Quite well, I thank you. Have this easy chair."

"Please let me sit on this smaller one; I prefer it."

"I am so glad that you came just as you did, or

I should have missed you, and I should have regretted that."

"I see that your horse is saddled. You must not let me keep you; I am going in a few moments."

"By no means. You shall stay until you are tired of me. There is no one in the world that I would have preferred to see this morning." His conscience must have pricked him just a little, however glad he was to see her.

"How happy I should be! How happy I am! My friends all give me such hearty welcome."

The Doctor had drawn his chair nearer and had taken her dainty little hand in his, saying,

"It were impossible that they could do otherwise, I am sure. You are so good and kind to every one and every thing, we can't help loving you."

"You should not say these things to me; you would spoil me."

"I must say them, or these roses and lilies would cry out and shame me. I have missed you so much; so often I would have gone to you for advice and comfort."

"Then you have had some trouble."

"Yes, trouble about which I could not have gone to any except you."

He still held her hand in his. She made no effort to withdraw it, only she placed her other hand on top of his, and gave it one of her own little sympathetic pats. He leaned down and kissed it thrice—kissed it as he would have kissed a lily.

"Are your troubles cured?" she asked.

"Yes, I had to fight them out by myself, when

you could have cured them so quickly. The battle was terrible; but we will let that go now."

"That is right, bury them; never brood over what cannot be helped. You have my sympathy, whatever they may have been." She gently withdrew her hand, he scarcely knew when or how.

"Now for the present. I want so much to ask about Cousin Fan, and you are the only one whom I could ask."

"I do not feel that I would be betraying any confidence, if I tell you that she grieved no little when you went away. She felt that you ought to have called to say good-by; but she was reasonable about it. On second thought she became satisfied that it would have been harder for you both. Your not coming decided a point for her about which she was very unsettled; and I assure you that she was glad. I am sure that you understand."

"Yes," he said slowly, "I am quite sure that I do. Doubtless, it was all for the best."

The hesitancy with which this was said shot a shadow of pain across her usually serene face. It lingered there not a moment, however, before it was gone and she was as composed as ever. They sat in silence for quite a while, each busy with his or her own thoughts.

"And now?" he asked.

"And now she is the most useful woman in all the land. Wherever there is sorrow or trouble of any kind, there she will be found. There is no touch so soothing; no voice so gentle and sweet, so encouraging as hers. I have never known a spirit under such perfect control. If you were in trouble, of

whatever nature, you might go to her with perfect assurance that she could and would give you the benefit of her advice or her most tender sympathy. I have never seen such perfect abnegation of self in any one. At what are you smiling? Are you skeptical?"

"Not at all—not in the slightest degree; I was smiling simply at your saying these things of another, when they are your own prerogatives—or probably attributes is the better word."

"Oh, you do not know as I do," she said.

"Well, all I know is, that I would go to you in preference to any one else in the world. Now I will not argue that point with you." And the ghost of a blush flashed over her face as she said,

"Will you always feel that way?" and she came and stood beside him.

"Yes, I am quite sure, always." Then she leaned over and kissed his forehead. His arm stole around her slender waist, her hand resting on his shoulder.

"Do you know, my very dear friend," she said, with a tremor in her voice, "that there is only one other person in the world, this wide, wide world, that has ever said so much to me?"

"And that was Fan."

"Yes, it was she. While every one is good to me; and many come to me with their troubles and all that—yet how many trust me above every other one in the world? Two people; and they are the ones whose confidence is sweeter to me than all else of this life," and she resumed her chair; and again they lapsed into silence.

"How did you know that I had returned? Who told you?"

"No one told me. When I awakened this morning I felt that if I would come over to Sandowns I would see you here. So impressed was I with that feeling, that I could scarcely wait for my breakfast. Then I hurried, for something urged me to haste if I wanted to see you."

"But you would have seen me to-morrow. Everybody is coming to-morrow, and I gave special directions that you were to be invited; and I am sure you would have come."

"I felt this morning, and I feel now, that I must come at once, if I wanted to see you."

"That was strange," the Doctor said.

"Perhaps so," was all the explanation that she gave. After a moment she said,

"If we are to come to-morrow, I will not keep you longer this morning."

"Do not go quite yet, please; I think I will tell you something. While I was away I met my fate. I have long held that I would never marry until I met the one that was indispensable to my happiness. That one I have met and she says me nay."

"Impossible, unless she were pledged to another," said Little Miss Tippers. "You did not take her seriously, did you? She was jesting." He shook his head. "She was trying you," again he shook his head. "She did not mean it."

"Indeed she did."

"Then you did not give her time to know you—or, she is a goose," and this from Little Miss Tippers!

"I could not have fallen in love with a goose—the other horn of the dilemma may be true; I do not think so."

Little Miss Tippers remained silent.

"I shall devote the remainder of my life to my fellow-man," said he.

"Then your disappointment will prove a great blessing to your kind; but—oh, it is so hard to tell—it is so hard to know—what to-morrow may bring forth."

Her pony growing restless, she arose to go. Having seen her off—the dear, good, wise Little Miss Tippers, he stood watching after her, wondering what she could have meant.

To-morrow will tell its own tale.

CHAPTER XXII

When Doctor Jack went down to breakfast the next morning he was full of plans for the day, how he would amuse his friends, and give them a real nice time. He had planned for some new sports he had learned abroad; but what the bard Burns wrote as to the uncertainty of the plans "of mice and men" had long since become classic. Having finished his breakfast, he strolled out into the great hall, where his morning's mail was usually placed. His eye caught sight of a hand-writing on one of the envelopes, that sent the blood buzzing through his brain; it was as if he had had an electric shock. His heart was beating in an outrageous way. Seizing the letter, he rushed to his private office in a most undignified manner, and placing it on the table stepped back a couple of paces, eying it the while. A strange, hard expression came into his face. Addressing the letter as if it were some sentient thing, he said,

"Where did you come from? I have a mind not to read you—not even to break your seal—you—you— Don't you know that I have given all that up long since? Say? I am going to shake you off—I am! I'll none of you. I am cured of all that foolishness. I am cured! There!" And he stood gazing at the poor, innocent letter, lying before him in its mute appeal to the great strong man standing there, shaking his finger, and railing at it. For full five minutes he stood there in that way, then the impassionate glow in his eyes softened and softened until the revulsion gave place to an expression of

ineffable tenderness. He picked the letter up—he looked it over—then—he kissed it, and pressed it to his heart as he would have done the dearest thing in all the world. Finally, tearing open the envelope with trembling impatience to read:

“EAST EAGLENEST, N. H.,
“*August 25, 1859.*

“DEAR DOCTOR:

“After a half dozen forwardings, your note asking to call was received this moment—observe how prompt I am! Your first request passed over into the realms of the impossible; even before my good aunt forwarded the note. The alternative: ‘Will you not name the earliest date possible when I may call?’ Certainly; you may call at 8 P. M. Wednesday next, if you should still wish to do so. (Of course, if you have left Hazelhurst, and shall not receive this, then—I shall not expect you. Irish.)

“Very truly,
“LILIAN LAW.”

His mind made itself up on the spot. “Let’s see,” he soliloquized. “This is Thursday, and this is boat day. To-morrow night I can catch the train at Warsaw—let me see—yes, I can make it. Shall I wire? No, I will simply keep the engagement. Hold! I believe the boat is at the landing now, taking on cotton.” Springing to the bell cord, “I must catch that boat, or I will be twenty-four hours late.” A servant answered the bell immediately.

“Tell Henry to mount a horse as quickly as possible, and go to the landing and ask Captain Grizzle

to hold the boat a few minutes for me, that I am coming on important business. Be quick as ever you can."

In a very few moments a horse's feet were heard cantering down the driveway. Henry had just passed through the gate, when he heard the first whistle blow for the boat to get under way. The Doctor's now quick ear heard it too.

"There! There! Tut, tut, tut! There goes the boat. I shall be left."

He rushed to the window, and saw Henry pull his cap well down over his ears, and saw him touch Maud's flanks with his heels; and before he could call to the boy to hurry, Maud was off. In three jumps the noble little mare was flying down the road, as only a Kentucky-bred horse could. The Doctor stood at the window watching the race with bated breath.

"If only she can make it! I would not miss that boat for any consideration. I am so anxious to make it. I am sure that Henry has neither whip nor spur. How thoughtless! My! Maud is surely flying. If only the boy had whip and spur, I believe he would make it in time."

Soon the Doctor could see neither mare nor rider for the cloud of dust she kicked up as she went. They now pass a turn in the road and are gone. The Doctor wrings his hands and rushes across the room and back to his former position, and turns his ear to the window. He opens his mouth that he may the better hear, and listens, and listens with feverish impatience.

"There she goes, thundering across the bridge at

the creek; she is just half way. If only she can make it!" He listens again. "Tut, tut, tut! 'There is the second whistle, in two minutes the boat will be gone. If only Henry had carried a whip or spur!"

The Doctor stood there, wringing his hands as if he would wring them off. In exactly one minute and a half, a long whistle blew.

"Bless the mare, she has made it."

With a deep sigh of relief and with a heart light as bliss, the Doctor hurried up the servants who were replacing the things that had been removed from his trunks. Then he sat down and scribbled a note to his expected guests, telling them that important business had called him to New York that morning; to make themselves at home and have a good time, and to wish him God-speed. He could not say exactly when he would be home; but in the near future, when he would make amends for his show of inhospitality. In the mean time, the buckboard was hurrying down the road with his trunks; and a tandem was at the door ready for the master's going. With a few hasty instructions and good-bys the Doctor was following at a rattling pace.

Within ten minutes the boat had dropped away from the wharf and was steaming down the river. Soon the Doctor had drawn a seat to the prow, and had given himself up to the first sober second thought he had been able to take since starting on this hare-brained trip. Now, what had become of those heroic resolutions that had been so deliberately and so sensibly made? Stop! Can love be deliberate? Can love be consistent? Can love be sensi-

ble? I trow not. We should not enter too fully into particulars, for we would safeguard his reputation for sanity. But, often he changed his position in a quick nervous way; then he would rise from his seat and take a turn around the deck, only to return to his chair again. Later, when the steward came to announce luncheon, he found the Doctor sitting with arms folded, his chin on his chest, quiet and still—the Doctor was dreaming, dreaming of the sunshine that was in the picture before him.

Six o'clock P. M., September 8th. A hack stopped in front of Hazelhurst. Yes, Doctor De Mar's old rooms were vacant and at his disposal. Of course Mrs. Hanner was surprised at the Doctor's sudden arrival; but no explanation was asked or offered.

Eight o'clock P. M. on the strike. The door bell at the rectory rang. Almost immediately the door was opened, and opened by Miss Law in person. The Doctor had his card in his hand ready to send in, and so confused was he that he handed it to her, which she took in a grave, comical way—slowly reading, "Jack De Mar. Ah, I see; Doctor De Mar to see the rector."

"Come, come, this is too bad, Miss Law," extending his hand. "You were surely expecting me. I am here by your appointment."

"I? I thought you were down in Dixie, basking in the Sunny South's sunny sunshine, amid the magnolias, and the cotton, and the corn," said the young lady, taking his hand very cordially. "I was told on my return that you had gone home on the first of the

month, so I could not have been expecting you here this evening. Then you had not gone home at all—how stupid of me! Come in. My surprise, which is great, is only equaled by this pleasure.”

“It is exceedingly kind of you to say that; it discounts your raillery of a moment ago. I *had* gone home; but your note, which was forwarded to me there, came three days after my arrival. My luggage had been only partially unpacked, and within an hour I was on my way to keep this engagement. ‘Observe how prompt I am.’ You were expecting some one, and as you were not expecting me, am I *de trop?*”

“No, not at all,” and with her face suffused with blushes she added, “I do not know why I answered the door bell just now. Could it have been intuition, think you?”

If she expected an answer to this, she did not give him time to give it, as she immediately reminded him that they were standing, and led him into the parlor, where were the rector and some other company, to whom the Doctor was introduced. It was not until the evening was well spent that the Doctor had an opportunity of saying anything that was not intended for other ears than hers. When that time came, he said,

“Can you imagine my surprise at your sudden flight, the morning following your school exhibition?”

“Most certainly not. Why should you have been surprised? In the first place, my departure was decided upon with the utmost deliberation; it was pretty generally discussed by those who were inter-

ested. Secondly, on that morning we breakfasted at our usual hour, in that leisurely way which you doctors insist is the only correct way. Thirdly, we drove in broad daylight to the depot behind the slowest team in town. Fourthly, we waited patiently for the belated train. And lastly, we waited much longer for some friends to come to bid us *bon voyage*—who by the way came not at all.” This last clause was uttered with a mischievous twinkle of the eye. “There are serious grounds,” she continued, “for surprise that any one should have been surprised.”

“Now, Miss Law, is this banter quite fair? You know that you gave me no intimation that you were going away. You had been so much occupied with the duties incident to the closing of the school, that you had not granted me any opportunity of cultivating your friendship, when you must have known how anxious I was to do so. On the evening of your reception, your unbending—may I use that term?—was so kind, I am sure that it was a reasonable inference to draw that I might hope to have an opportunity of seeing you again.”

“No, Doctor, I have no especial powers of divination, nor the more modern power of mind-reading. If I had known that you had any idea of calling, I certainly would have notified you of my intention.”

“We will not waste any more of these precious moments in discussing the past. I am much more seriously interested in the future—the very near future, though. Seeing that I have had scarcely any chance of saying anything to you this evening, when may I call again? And please say that I may call

often—I am so anxious that we two should be friends.”

A decided shade of sadness came over her face as she said,

“No, Doctor, and I assure you, that I am so sorry that I must say—no. I have made an exception in your favor this time, as I felt that this much was due you. I have not forgotten my obliga—”

“Will you please pardon me for interrupting you, my dear Miss Law? If you could be made to realize what all this means to me, you would forgive, or at least condone, my insistence. You admit that you regret that you must say no. Is it asking too much? Why? Why may I not call if it would be agreeable to you for me to do so? Why may not you and I be friends? It may not be very generous to remind you that I have come hundreds of miles—actually leaving a large company of friends at my home, on my invitation, to come to call upon you. Would I have done that if I had not been very seriously in earnest? And behold, I have not had ten minutes talk with you!”

A silence followed this that to him seemed interminable. It was apparent that she was doing battle with herself. He felt that this was not acting on her part. Conflicting emotions were striving for mastery—her face was like a troubled sea; one moment it looked as if the blood would gush from every pore, only to be followed by a deathly pallor. With a powerful effort she regained control over herself and said,

“Doctor, could you and I be friends?” There was a decided stress laid on each word; but it was

more decided on the word "friends," and her eyes met his squarely.

"Most certainly yes—why not, pray?"

At this juncture the performance at the piano came to a close, and the brief opportunity for conversation between them did also. From then on the conversation was general until it was time for the company to depart, the Doctor leaving at the same time.

Could a visit have been less satisfactory? Yes and no. Most unsatisfactory in that their conversation was interrupted just when it was, leaving nothing settled. Satisfactory, in that he was satisfied that she was not indifferent to him; at which conclusion, his heart fluttered like some caged wild thing, endeavoring to be free from the toils of its prison. He resolved that he would not take no for an answer; and before he retired for the night he penned the following note:

"HAZELHURST, *September 8th.*"

"(11 o'clock.)"

"DEAR MISS LAW:

"I cannot rest until I shall have given expression to my unwillingness to accept your answer to my request to be allowed to call again. I cannot think that you will, under the circumstances, deny me another interview, and that at an early date. I cannot trust myself to say more to-night, as my heart and head are in one wild tumult.

"Yours most truly,

"JACK DE MAR."

CHAPTER XXIII

It was fruitless for Doctor De Mar to attempt to sleep; so the night was spent pacing back and forth across the room, and in vain efforts at reading. Early the next morning his note was dispatched to the rectory. After ever so long waiting, the messenger returned, empty-handed—there was no reply to his note. The day wore away as it must, be the watching never so weary; but still without any news from Miss Law. Dick was called up and questioned as to whether he had safely delivered the note, and whether he was sure there was no answer.

“Yes, boss, I shore carried hit ter de rectory, an’ gin hit ter dat gal what cum ter de door; an’ I tole her I wuz ter have er answer. Den she cum back an’ said dere wazn’t no answer at all ter hit; an’ dat’s de blessed trufe.”

Scores of conjectures forced themselves upon the Doctor’s mind during that long, long day. At one hour he would be hopelessly dejected, at another he would be buoyant with hopeful courage. At one hour he could see nothing on the bright side, then he would say to himself, “She must care for me—she shall care for me—she does care for me!”

So, oscillating between hope and despair, the next twenty-four hours were passed. He was getting desperate, and with heroic efforts trying to make up his mind to throw the case over and return home. But, how could he do that? His heart having slumbered through all these years, and now having been touched, was quickened in every fiber, and was so

thoroughly aroused that it seemed to overwhelm every idea of pride and self-respect. His condition was the more pitiable from the fact of his robust manhood—his usual equipoise of mind and self-control. It was the case of a great strong man drunk with love—caught in its relentless undertow; and there was but one hand in the whole wide world to save; and with the desperate energy of a drowning man, he cried with all his heart to that hand for help. Would that help ever come?

His mail had come during the morning; but it had lain on his table all unheeded for all these hours. Late in the afternoon, from sheer want of something to divert his mind, he took up his letters and began looking them over in a perfunctory way. One by one they were picked up and then laid down unopened, until he came to the last one, which was directed in Miss Law's handwriting. He started as he made this discovery, and within a moment was shaking as though he had a terrible ague. He tore open the envelope to read:

"RECTORY, *September 10th.*

"MY DEAR DOCTOR:

"Your note was received yesterday. Are you not making an egregious mistake in not accepting my reply to your request to call, as final? I can but think so. I am sure that we cannot be *friends*. It were far better then we should not meet again. You cannot realize how much it pains me to feel that I must say this to you, Doctor; but I am quite sure that it is for the best.

"Very truly,
"LILIAN LAW."

If the Doctor was uncomfortable before, he was thrice miserable now. He sat for some time stunned by this blow; then he moved restlessly about the room. At last he made up his mind to go home and rid himself of this madness—throw it off entirely—yes, that was the best thing to do. Why should he make himself miserable about any one who was perfectly indifferent concerning himself. Again he picked up the note and read it over and over. Why should she have underscored the word friend? And then he could but think that she was sincere when she admitted that it pained her to give him that answer. “No, she is not indifferent toward me. I will see her again. I must see her again!” Going to his desk, he wrote:

“MY DEAR MISS LAW:

“It may be unpardonably rude—it may be really unkind—but I just cannot take *no* for an answer. I must see you one time more before going home; and then—well—! Please do not deny me this one little request—I am unutterably miserable—I cannot go away feeling like this. Please—I must come!—I must see you one more time! Surely I may come to say good-by. May I not?

“Most sincerely,

“Your friend

“JACK DE MAR.”

Dick was again called into requisition, and the note forwarded; and another period of waiting begun; but this time it was not for so long a time before Dick came scurrying down the lane. The Doctor knew by the expansive grin on Dick's face that

he had an answer to his note, whatever that answer might be. My! How his heart beat! The answer was this:

RECTORY, 10th.

"DEAR DOCTOR DE MAR:

"I would not like to call your note rude—exactly—but your insistence is something remarkable.

"I have very good reasons for not receiving gentlemen callers. I have made more than one exception in your favor, which has rendered me liable to criticism among my friends—the very thing, of all else, that I have so studiously avoided for years. So, you will see why I should not wish to place myself in further position to make matters simply worse. I am sure, that if you would take the time to think deliberately, you would not wish to place me in an embarrassing position; would you?

"However, as you are going home, and seem so anxious to call one more time, I will be at home on Wednesday evening next; if you have not set an earlier day for your departure. In that event you will allow me to take this means of saying good-by.

"Very truly,
"LILIAN LAW."

With feverish haste, he sat down and wrote:

"MY DEAR FRIEND:

"Thanks—many thanks for your kind permission to call. You could never dream how grateful I am for that permission, though your date is ages away—not less than forty-eight hours—but I could not scold now if I wished to do so.

"Most gratefully,
"JACK DE MAR."

When Wednesday did come at last, many conflicting emotions fought for mastery in the Doctor's mind as he wended his way to keep this appointment at the rectory. One thing he fixed permanently in his mind: Miss Law would not trifle with him; and this was an anchor that he had occasion to cast to the leeward more than once. Now he was thoroughly conscious that he was not in condition to appear to the best advantage, or rather, to do himself justice, or rather still, to be himself. This was a new experience to him. He had never met a lady who inspired more than a passing interest until now. He had known scores of beautiful women—well connected, fascinating and withal wealthy—but his heart had gone unscathed. Now he found himself overwhelmingly in love; in love with a comparatively strange young woman; apparently poor in this world's goods; a stranger to the luxuries and comforts in which he had been cradled; and while he had never been taught to feel proud of his ancestry, yet he had instinctively respected it, and placed a proper value upon it.

Arriving at the rectory, he was met at the door by a servant and shown into the cozy little parlor, where a fire had been lighted to dispel the damp of the raw September evening. He drew a chair near the hearth and tried to be calm and collected. While casting a nervous glance around at the room, it never once occurred to him to contrast it with the large rich parlor of his far away Southern home.

He had not long to wait, until the door was quietly opened and admitted the only woman in all

the world for whom he cared—the only woman before whom he was all too ready to fall down and worship. She had evidently spent no little time on her toilet. She then and there presented a vision that never during his life faded from his memory. There was no fulsome display of finery; but everything she wore was in exact good taste. Whatever of color there was in her dress, or eyes, or hair, or in the flowers she wore, harmonized to perfection; of jewelry there was none. She wore a knot of violets, the sight of which brought to his mind that at their last meeting he had expressed a preference for that particular flower, and the thought added a strand to the cable of his hope. She came forward with an easy grace, tall and slender, but charmingly proportioned. There was a quiet, refined elegance in her every motion. Calm and collected as she appeared, there was an eager look in her beautiful brown eyes as she met his searching gaze. Neither spoke as their hands met in a firm grasp. In silence they sat down; this was no occasion for ordinary common-places.

“I must have lost my tongue on the way. How odd this silence,” the Doctor said.

“Do you think so? Is it not true that sometimes silence is more eloquent than words? Silence is ever considered golden. Certainly it is safer. If we have kept silent, when it would have been best to have spoken, the opportunity may present itself when we make amends; but having said too much, it can never be recalled.”

“Well, yes, I have no doubt but that what you say is correct; and were it not that there is so much

that I must say to you; and were it not that you have given me to understand that I could not depend upon any further interviews with you, I could be content to sit thus indefinitely—alone with you—and know no happier state.”

To this no answer came, except the flushing of the face he so intently gazed at. He continued,

“Miss Law, why must I go away and never see you again?”

After a lapse of some time she said,

“Because, Doctor, it will be best for you—and best for me.”

“That is better than the average woman’s answer; though I should have been terribly shocked if you had said simply ‘because.’ Your answer, however, is almost as unsatisfactory. You would be hopelessly deficient in womanly intuition if you did not know that my heart, nay, my whole being, is infatuated with you. And it is meet and proper that you should know more about me than you do. In the twenty-five years of my life this is the first time when I have felt called upon to say who and what I am. I had no idea how embarrassing it would be to speak of one’s personality. There are certain matters about which I would not ask you to take my word—I mean as to who and what my connections are and have been; what my standing is in a community where I have lived always; and whether my circumstances are such as to insure you a comfortable home and congenial surroundings—”

“Excuse me, Doctor, for interrupting you; is this necessary between—”

“Yes, Miss Law, life, and even love, is not all

sentiment. 'There is a practical side to everything. I will give any friend of yours, whom you may indicate, references to any number of persons who are in position to know about these things, and whose reliability is unimpeachable.'

"Doctor, I should not need any indorsement of anything you might say."

"Still, Miss Law, you cannot—it is impossible that you should—realize what the outcome of this interview means for me. It involves my earthly happiness—my very life—everything. Whether I stand or fall, I must feel that I have not left one word unsaid—one word that might be necessary to your having my case clearly put before you. Oh, it means so much to me! With my whole heart, I love you. I have never loved any one else. I shall never love any one else. With you I can be happy and contented; without you I shall be unhappy and miserable every way beyond the power of language to express. If a life devoted to your service—if a love that knows no qualification—if ample means to supply your every wish, would make you happy, your happiness as my wife would be assured."

Whatever of protest she had contemplated faded out of her eyes and she had turned them squarely on his during his last remarks. The procedure was so much out of the orthodox manner that she was first confused, then won. During the remainder of his remarks she never took her eyes from his face. It was not a stare, but rather a look of keenest interest—drinking in every word as it fell from his lips.

"I have recently lost both my parents," he went on, "who were ever considerate of my happiness

and well-being. As they were growing old, they were naturally anxious that I should marry. I may as well tell you here, that it has been the custom in our family to intermarry. I have several marriageable cousins, charming in every way. There was one in whom my family were especially interested. When this cousin was born, I was four years old, and an old aunt of ours, who had never been married and was very wealthy, conceived the idea of giving her property to this little girl and myself with the understanding that when we grew up we should marry. We were thrown together on any and all occasions, but there was never any urging. I have wondered that I could not love her. She is beautiful, highly accomplished, and with a fortune, independent of our aunt's estate, equal to my own. There was but one thing wanting—we were not in love with each other, and without that we would not think of marrying. To be fully candid, I did make heroic efforts to think of her as indispensable to my happiness—those efforts were fruitless. I could not love her. I cannot love her, except as my dear cousin. I can love only you! On my honor as a gentleman, I say to you, that my heart had never been touched, until I came here and saw you."

At this juncture her face gradually sank into the palms of her hands, while she cried,

"Spare me, Doctor, I pray you; spare me—spare us both!"

"Say not so. I would spare you any pain; but I must say my say. I must win you—you must not say me no. All of the pent-up affection of which my poor heart is capable has burst in on me, and I

find myself overwhelmed by it—swept off my feet by this tornado of feeling for you, dear one, which no other being has ever inspired.”

Her hands dropped from her face and gradually her eyes rose until they met his pathetic, pleading face, and rested there until he ceased to speak.

“Believe me,” he continued, “when I say that my whole heart has gone out to you in pure, true love; and in a way that I had thought impossible. If you find in your heart that you can love me, and trust me, I am sure that I can make you happy, if a devoted heart and ample means can make happiness on earth. I can but feel that an all-kind Providence was keeping my heart whole until I met you. I could never be happy with any other woman. Oh! what must I say or do, to convince you of the truth of what I am saying to you? How shall I be able to give you some idea of what I feel, and what all this means to me?”

On and on he pleaded, with all the eloquence he could command; with all the pathos his heart could prompt; conscious all the time of how weak his efforts were, how far short he was falling of all that his hungry heart wanted to say.

When he had finished speaking, they sat looking into each other's eyes. He was wondering what effect his pleading had made. He made no attempt to take her hand or to draw nearer to her; but noticing that she seemed dazed, he said,

“Dearest one, have you heard what I have been trying to say to you?”

She made an effort to arouse herself, but apparently without success. Her eyes slowly closed, the

color came and went in her face. He became alarmed lest she should faint. He leaned forward and put his arm around her waist; her head drooped until it rested on his shoulder. In this way they remained for some moments, never a word being spoken; then she raised her face to his and their lips met in one long, sweet kiss. In the next instant she tore herself away and sprang to her feet, and said,

"Doctor, do you really care for me?"

"I do—I do, with all my heart I do! How can you doubt me?"

"Then I do not doubt you. As you do care, spare me—spare me this ordeal. We must not meet again; it cannot be. Oh, it cannot be as you wish. Please say good-by."

Again he tried to take her in his arms; but she glided away from him in all her dignity, saying,

"Doctor, you are a gentleman; you would not take advantage of a weakness; please spare me. I am not myself. This interview must come to an end. Do not ask me, I can explain nothing; it would only give pain and could not alter the outcome. Good-by, please," and she held out her hand to him.

The Doctor could not be rude, though it broke his heart. He raised her hand to his lips and kissed it, then turning left the room. As he passed out, he heard her drop into a chair, and the low groan that escaped her lips. He paused—how could he leave her thus? It was with the greatest effort he resisted turning back, but he did so, feeling that he had no right to intrude upon her privacy. Slowly

and sadly he wended his way homeward, dazed and confused—not knowing what to think. That she felt indifferent toward him, he could not believe; yet that she meant exactly what she had said, he equally believed. Sure he was that she was not trifling with him.

CHAPTER XXIV

From sheer exhaustion the Doctor slept soundly until morning, when he awoke with a dull, heavy feeling at his heart—a feeling that life was not worth the living. After breakfast he had a long, confidential talk with his landlady, during which he gained the idea that Miss Law might entertain a very strong prejudice against slavery. Mrs. Hanner had not said so, in so many words; but she had given him that idea. It is to be suspected that she had done so with a view of showing him that his suit would be hopeless; for she had come to like him very much—so much that she would wish to save him further pain. If she had expected to see a cloud of disappointment darken his handsome face, she was disappointed; for on the contrary, his face lighted up wonderfully as he hastily excused himself and left the room.

Very soon he was seen striding away toward the woods, his gun upon his shoulder, his step having regained its wonted elasticity, and his face something of the peaceful calm of by-gone days. On and on he went; hunting? No, thinking and thinking, with all the concentration that he alone can do who has some overpowering motive spurring him to the very best within him. Finally, throwing himself down on that grassy knoll where first he had met Miss Law—where first his heart had been touched by the witching goddess, he thought it out. "This explains everything. To think of a few negroes, more or less, standing between us two! I will brush

this away, in one way or another.” Rising and returning home, he sat down and wrote this:

“MY DEAR MISS LAW:

“I am sure that you have been thoroughly honest with me. I do not believe that you have uttered one word with the intention of leading me to think that you cared one fig for me. But—and this may sound egotistical—I do not believe that you are wholly indifferent toward me; and yet there seems to be something that over-balances this. What that something is, I have been unable to conceive; and you have persistently declined to enlighten me. Now there is one thing that may possibly be in the way—yet, if that were the real cause, I am at loss to understand why you should hesitate to say so; I refer to my being a Southerner—in other words, a slave-owner. For the nonce, I had lost sight of the fact—and passing strange it is, that it should be a fact—that so large a proportion of Northern people entertain a deep-seated prejudice against us. And the more strange it is, that this is as applicable to the most intelligent as it is to the uninformed, who might be excused on account of their ignorance.

That any person or set of people should be opposed to our peculiar institution, might be perfectly natural and unblamable; and we make no complaint against them, whatever. What we *do* complain of is that we should be condemned in toto for a condition that we did not inaugurate, and for which we are not responsible, which was thrust upon us—and by the very people who are readiest to damn us. It is unfair; it is unchristian. We of the South en-

slaved no one. Nor are we responsible for slavery in this country. As far as I have been able to learn, the South never imported but one cargo of negroes; and it would not be fair to say the South did that, because throughout that section, that importation was frowned down and condemned, in such a way as to make it a failure financially. How can well-informed people forget that the negro was brought to this country by British and New England ship-owners; and that when they ceased to be profitable in this cold climate, they were shipped South and *sold* to our forefathers? If slavery be a heinous crime now, it was a heinous crime then; and the negro should have been freed, instead of being shipped off and sold. The holdings were not so numerous then that their liberation would have bankrupted the country or endangered society. Now after he has thriven and greatly multiplied in the genial climate of the South, under the care of his Southern master, it has become a very different matter. He is the principal source of wealth, and has become so numerous that to free him now would involve most disastrous results; almost, if not quite, bankrupting the country and jeopardizing society, if not the Government itself.

“Now, Miss Law, I do not propose to go into any exhaustive discussion of this subject. I have neither the time nor the inclination, nor yet the data at hand, from which it should be studied and honestly discussed; but I do so much wish to put myself right with you. You have not intimated that you hold extreme views on this subject, nor that this is the stone that must be rolled away. On second

thought, I can understand why you would hesitate to do so. But how was I to know? As I have said, I cannot afford to leave a stone unturned where the happiness of my life is at stake. You will scarcely be prepared to believe me when I say, if I had to free my negroes to-day my greatest regret and solicitude would be on their account. They have been, and are now, my trusted friends. We have grown up together. We trust each other, and would die for each other. What more can be said?

"I will not ask you to reply to this note if you do not care to do so. I will not ask to see you again if you do not wish to see me. I love you as I had thought I could never love any one. I love you with my whole being. I shall live and die, true to that love; and if that love is unrequited, I shall be of all men the most miserable. Heaven grant that it may not compromise my hope of reaching that haven of final rest.

"I leave myself—my happiness—in your dear hands.

"JACK DE MAR."

Having mailed this letter, Doctor De Mar felt a load roll from his heart; he had done what he could. He doubted very much whether he would hear anything from it; but it was a stone turned. He spent the next few days with gun and rod, and, as far as outside appearances could determine, had regained his usual good spirits and composure. When Sunday came, contrary to his custom he remained at home from church; and when the family returned they found him in the sitting-room reading.

"You were not at church this morning, Doctor."

"No, Mrs. Hanner, I have spent the morning reading and thinking."

"There was quite a turn-out to-day. I believe that you were the only one I missed."

"Yes, well, of all sinners, I must have been the chiefest. Probably I should have gone, as I am thinking of going home. This is my last Sunday here."

"Miss Law asked after you, as we came out—if you were still here?"

"Did she, indeed? I would scarcely have expected her to feel sufficient interest in the matter to think of it at all. By the bye, Mrs. Hanner, I took advantage of your hint, though I am sure that you did not intend it as such, and wrote to Miss Law; and wrote very plainly. I am not at all sure how she took it; she may have been offended."

"I would scarcely think so, from the fact of her asking after you as she did to-day—something that she would not have done if she had been hurt."

"Mrs. Hanner, you said that Miss Law might object to me on sectional grounds, or at least it were possible, if not probable. You told me some time ago that she had had a number of offers. I suppose they were from this section; therefore, she could not have had the same objections to them, and they seemed not to have fared any better than I. How would you explain that?"

"I make no effort to explain anything concerning it, Doctor, because I know nothing positively about it; only, that she has rejected every offer that has been made her. For some reason she has granted

you greater indulgence than any one else; whether that was brought about by your insistence, or from special favor, I am unable to say. I have noticed it, and others have done so; and some have been so unkind as to tease her about it. I say *unkind*, for it has been a matter of concern with her friends to get her out of her retiring ways as much as possible; and any remark of that kind will only add to the difficulty."

The Doctor laughed a hard metallic laugh, and said,

"If Miss Law has been more indulgent to me, than the other poor devils, they have my unqualified sympathy; and may the Lord have mercy upon their souls. I believe that is what the judges say, when they condemn some poor wretch to the gibbet. Well, it seems that she had not forgotten me. That I suppose ought to be some consolation."

"May I ask," said Mrs. Hanner, "if you had any answer to your letter?"

"Not a word."

The announcement of dinner put an end to the conversation.

When the Doctor returned from hunting the next day, Inde ran to meet him, with the information that Miss Law had spent the afternoon there, and that she had just gone.

"Then you have had a nice day of it—haven't you?"

"No, I did not," said the child, "she and mother went off to the library, and shut the door, and would not let me go in. They must have had some secrets."

Fearing that the child might say too much, he emptied his catch to distract her mind from the subject.

At the dinner table he attempted to read Mrs. Hanner's face; but twice she caught him in the act, and he desisted. Matters must take their course. He had tried so hard to unravel the tangled skein that had wound so unmercifully around his heart, and had miserably failed. Now let Old Time take it in hand. He generally straightens things out, if one will only wait.

Thursday was spent in fishing; and having whipped the stream with fair success in filling his bag, and in tiring himself, he came to his favorite pool, where he was accustomed to rest, and threw himself down on the grass. He had informed Mrs. Hanner that morning at the breakfast table that he had decided to go home on Friday. That was in a way settling something; but he was not sure that he had not been too hasty. While he thought, he discovered a very decided odor of violets. Where were they? He looked around in every direction; no one was in sight. Finally he discovered that the violets lay scattered on the ground about him. Sweet violets they were, not the wild ones that grew thereabouts. Moreover, they were not in the least wilted. He arose to his feet to take a more extended view of the neighborhood, but there was no one in sight. Still, there were the violets in his hand, sweet, crisp, and fresh; who could have placed them there? And why should they have been put at that particular place? It was quite puzzling. Reaching home, he went immediately and placed the flowers

in water. Without the slightest ground for so doing, he connected Miss Law with the violets. How absurd a thing a man in love will do is beyond divination. He leaned over them and buried his face into the very heart of them—and—positively kissed them. Remember, this was on Thursday evening. To-morrow he was going home; and whether he should ever see Hazelhurst again, was exceedingly doubtful. How about the violets? He picked them up and looked them over, one by one.

"It is strange," he soliloquized, "who could have placed those violets there on that particular place? Violets at that. I am going home to-morrow. When I came, everything looked bright and promising. As the direction is changed, presto! all is changed."

He had learned to look over his mail when it came in; but there was nothing there of any importance.

"I might as well begin packing my trunks"; and he fell to the task with a will. He had not more than half finished, when he stopped and looked at the violets.

"It would scarcely be good form not to go and say good-by. Though I doubt if it is expected of me—it might be embarrassing. As I am going to-morrow—well, I might go over and say good-by—to the family. That is it, I will just say good-by to the family."

Nine o'clock. The Doctor rang the bell at the rectory door. When the servant came, he handed her his card, which had written on it in pencil, "To say good-by to the family." He was shown into the parlor, where burned a cheerful fire. There was an

odor of violets. The rector came in and was soon followed by his wife and Miss Law. The conversation was commonplace to a decided degree—to a degree that showed that there was some embarrassment. The Doctor was just waiting for a pause in the conversation to say good-by, and take his departure, when there was an outcry from a child, evidently in pain. The rector and his wife hastened to ascertain the cause. The rector soon returned and asked the Doctor to excuse them as the child had hurt herself and was quite nervous.

Miss Law and Doctor Jack sat looking straight into the burning embers and at the pictures they saw there. Among others, the Doctor saw one certain evening that had been spent in that room, when this silence was supposed to be eloquent, and his companion had upturned her lips to his. The memory came rushing back to overwhelm him again. He immediately arose and said,

“Miss Law, may I commission you to say good-by to Mrs. and Mr. Twedon for me? I go home to-morrow.”

Miss Law had risen and was standing some two or three paces from him. She began by saying,

“Doctor De Mar, I had thought you incapable of cruelty to any one, and more especially to me, after your recent protestations, which I suppose you have not so soon forgotten.”

He started back, aghast.

“I cruel—and to you?”

“When you affirmed and re-affirmed that you

cared for me above everything else in the world, I believed you—believed in you implicitly.”

He advanced a pace, with utter amazement depicted in his face.

“Miss Law, the one great satisfaction that I was carrying away with me to my desolate home, was the conviction that you were incapable of trifling with me.”

“I trifle—and with you?” assuming an injured air. “Then I must have been mistaken in thinking that you were cruel—in thinking that you did not really care—so very much.” Advancing with both hands extended, “Then you are mistaken in thinking me capable of trifling with you now.” She took both his hands in hers, and looking up in his face, asked,

“How could you be so cruel? How could you stay away from me all these days? How could you go away now and leave me”—she hesitated a moment—“when I wanted you—so much?”

In tender thought, I drop the curtain, not so much to hide that which might be deemed ludicrously silly by those who have gone unscathed by the gentle god, or by those perhaps who have grown *passee* and skeptical; but I drop it rather because of the sacredness of it all.

CHAPTER XXV

During the afternoon of that eventful Thursday a note had been handed to Inde at Mrs. Hanner's gate—it matters not by whom—with the request that it be handed to Doctor De Mar as soon as he should return. It is one of the prerogatives of happy, playful childhood to forget. Inde was no exception to the rule, and not likely to forego any of her rights—Inde forgot. It was while waiting for her boarder's return that night Mrs. Hanner happened to find the note, dropped and forgotten by the child, in the sitting-room. She carried it to the Doctor's room and placed it on his table. When that gentleman returned he found it lying there; and in substance it said something like this:

"If Doctor De Mar will call at the rectory before going South he will hear something which he may consider to his advantage."

In a half dozen places the paper upon which it was written was stained by the crushed violets it contained.

Matters pertinent moved rapidly in the next few days. In fact, it is wonderful sometimes how much may be crowded into a few days—when "Barkis is willing."

On the following morning, when Doctor De Mar called at the rectory quite a number of matters were discussed, only to be hauled over and discussed anew. If you have had experience you know how it was; if you have not, you would not understand, nor would you learn anything that would advantage

you when your time comes—they are all different. He was to call the next morning and evening. Sunday he was to meet her at church and accompany her home. Then he was not to call again until Tuesday evening, as he was going to the city Monday, returning the next day; for so it was mutually arranged.

Monday morning saw a very spruce young gentleman swinging toward the station to catch the first fast train for the city. His step was springing—his face was aglow with health and strength and contentment. He had the appearance of a well-to-do man, satisfied with his lot in life.

New York City, 2 P. M. The same day and the same young man. Scene: 'Tiffany's. * * * A solitaire, of the first water. * * * A keeper, in which was engraved: "Ever—Violets."

There is one visit from which we are tempted to withdraw the curtain, if you promise to be discreet. This is the second visit after the episode of the ring. How they met and what they said at their meeting is none of our affair. These delightful occasions are really too tender for the public gaze. They are even too delicate for the glare of gas or electricity; they want the soft, mellow light of pink wax tapers—and only two people. When we look from behind these curtains they are sitting on opposite sides of a small table—it is a very small one. He is sitting facing her, with his arm resting on the table; she facing the fire, with her side to the table on which rested her left elbow, her hand supporting her chin. Her sleeves were of some open pattern; and

this left one had dropped away from her arm; well—an arm of which she had no cause to be ashamed, to say the least of it—round, white and tapering. She is looking into the glowing embers. What she thinks and what she feels, I could not be tempted to guess—I have never been a young woman in love.

“Dearie, let me see the rings on your finger,” holding out his hand. She placed hers in it. The stone in the engagement ring glowed and warmed with the love that was in their hearts; and such love! The love, I mean, the first love, that comes to grown-up people, whose habits and notions of things have been well formed; it is a very different affair from that kiddish fancy, born of impulse—overwhelming to-day—sinmmerring down to-morrow—transferred the next—leaving never a scar—scarcely a sigh—bidding it farewell. It may be safe to conjecture that something on this line of thought was passing through their minds; so often they found themselves thinking the same thoughts, independently.

“Is it not lovely? I have never cared for diamonds for myself; of course they are pretty and all that, but I have never coveted them; but, Jack, this is our engagement ring—a sacred pledge between us two—and I would not exchange it for all the gems that Kimberly has produced, or ever will produce. It means so much, Jack, to us! It means that you and I will go on loving each other; becoming dearer and dearer to each other; always living together, always loving and trusting each other—nothing ever coming between us—never a doubt nor the

shadow of a doubt." Then she paused; they were looking at each other; each reading undying love in the eyes of the other. For a moment they were silent.

"Ay, Jack?"

"Forever and forever!" Ah, how kind it is! How passing kind it is! The blind, dumb to-morrow, with its impenetrable veil. How many glad hearts would there be in the world to-day if the great future were to open out its vast, hidden store for mortal inspection?

"By the bye," said she, taking the keeper from her finger, "I am not sure that I fully comprehend this inscription: 'Ever—Violets.'"

"Ever, our love—ever and forever. For better, or for worse; in sickness and in health; ever and forever—through good report and bad report—forever. Violets. Bless their purple hearts! Had it not been for violets, I doubt me if I should be here now."

"Oh, yes you would; you can't fly in the face of fate."

"Ah, you little fatalist!"

"You know how hard I tried it—and see," holding up her jeweled hand.

"Did fate scatter those violets on the knoll where I found them—where first I met you?"

"They were wild ones no doubt; nature scatters them broadcast."

"Does nature, first hand, give that delightful odor to wild violets?" he said as he picked up a bunch of them and held them to her face. "Does fate pluck them, and scatter them about on the

grass, and at that particular spot? Have I told you, that when I threw myself down there that day, that I had made up my mind to go home; that you would never relent; but when I found those violets, they touched my dead hope, and there was a tremor at its heart—it almost breathed again. The violets bade me come to say good-by. If I had not come to say good-by, what then?”

“Surely you would not have gone off and not have said good-by; I will not believe that of you. You would have come when you received the note some one sent you.”

“I am not so sure of that; had it not been backed by the violets.”

“Indeed, you would. If any one had told me that I would throw myself at the head of any man, and more especially at the head of one who could spend days and days almost in sight of me, and not care enough to come to see me—whether he had permission or not, I would not have believed it—I would have scorned the idea. I cannot really believe it now—there is some mistake somewhere.”

“Tell me, dearest, who put the violets there, to set my poor heart to hoping again?”

“I know, but I will not tell until—”

“Until when?”

“Until—until you have a right to ask,” and the blood rushed over her face in utter confusion. He leaned across the table—the table was quite small.

“Well, there is one comfort, I shall not have long to wait.”

“Indeed, you will; that comes within my prerogative.”

"Prerogatives! You have enjoyed your prerogatives to the full; haven't you said no—and to me, think of it—dozens of times? There is a limit to most things, and prerogatives come within the rule. I came especially to tell you that I have written home to have everything in readiness for us by the first of October. Cousin Dick will be here next week; he is to give me away, you know."

"Doctor, surely you have done nothing of the kind. It is utterly impossible. Why, that is next week—in ten days—impossible!" A look of real distress came into her face. Let's drop the curtain one moment, please.

There! they have resumed their seats; and he is telling her, as he holds her hands in his, rather firmly, that his affairs at home have been woefully neglected. She must remember that he has spent but two or three days there in over two years. Everything left in the hands of the servants. Every interest demanded that he should return as early as possible. He would brook no reason for delay. He had quite a long string of capital reasons for hurrying up matters. You know how many specious arguments an impatient lover can muster, on occasion. He wound up by saying,

"Of course, I could not be 'so cruel' as to go and leave you behind."

"Really, Doctor, it is impossible. 'It is so sudden,' you know."

"Fate, dearie, fate—it is the hand of fate."

On and so, they discussed it, until finally she went into the library to find a calendar. After her return

they were standing before the fireplace; their heads were very near each other as they looked up the date.

"Let's see," said the Doctor, "the 26th will give us one day in the city. We ought to have more time there. How will the 26th suit you?"

"The 26th will not suit."

"No?"

"Must it really be next week?"

"Unquestionably."

"Then it must be the 24th. You don't mind, do you, Jack?" and her brown head nestled upon his bosom.

"I am charmed," he said as he stroked and kissed the wavy brown hair, "that will give us two more days in the city. We will meet Dick there; he will not mind, when we explain it to him. He is to marry soon, and will sympathize with us."

"Pray, how are you to explain without telling him that I moved up the date; and surely you would not tell him that!"

"Why not? You know that I cannot tell a lie. I can tell him that you anticipated two little, wee, tiny days, you know."

"Then, I am not going with you."

"Oh, you are not?"

"No, I shall open my school next Monday week."

"Did you ever happen to hear of the boy who said to another one, who was standing by watching him eat an apple, and had asked him for the core, 'There ain't no core to this apple?' Now that boy established a fact that is as unchanging as the laws of the Medes and Persians, and will abide until the Mil-

lenium comes: *There ain't going to be no school! There!*"

Now, gentle reader, we will slip away and leave them to themselves. Don't get your feet tangled in the curtains like that—how awkward you are!

Promptly on time—noon—September the 24th—the marriage of Jack De Mar and Miss Lilian Law was celebrated. If it had been possible to put this event off until the very last chapter, it might have been more in accordance with the usual order in such cases; and we would have been delighted in giving an extended account of the affair in ample form, and in the regular orthodox way; but having no choice whatever in the matter, we can but report it as it really did occur. As it was, there were a few choice friends—a few elegant flowers—a pretty ceremony—no cards; but this great world, brimful of happiness, into which they passed out there, on that lovely September day. The sunshine was bright as glinting gold, bedecked with rarest gems. The air was crisp as needle frost. The pied leaves on the great maples and elms, swayed by the gentle winds, turned first one mottled side and then the other, to catch the eye of the fickle god as he passed by. Everything was as heart could wish; only this great, big world was yet a trifle small for these loving hearts.

Mr. Dick De Mar, a cousin of Jack, and whom the reader has met, was the only member of the family that had been invited to attend the marriage ceremony, and at the time this was taking place was speeding northward as fast as steam and steel could carry him. His mind was pretty equally divided be-

tween Jack and Dell—what present he would give to Jack and what he would give his bride, and what he should carry back to his beautiful Dell. On his arrival in New York he went around to their bankers, where he was given a note from Doctor Jack, informing him of the change of program; which he would explain at sight. Further, that they would arrive in the city on the afternoon of the 24th, and would meet him at the Fifth Avenue Hotel.

Dick informed himself as to what hour they would arrive. When the time came, he posted himself in the ladies' parlor, and when they came in he was standing well down toward the center of the room, his hands thrust down in his pockets, his feet rather far apart, and with a quizzical expression on his face.

"Hello, Dick; you here?" said the Doctor, "I am sorry—"

"You haven't the appearance to me of a man that is sorry—I don't believe a word of it." Ignoring Jack's extended hand, he moved forward with his natural grace toward the bride, and, taking her hands in his, kissed her, saying,

"I am so delighted to know you, cousin mine," still holding her hands; "we are so grateful to you for taking compassion on this cousin of ours. We were beginning to entertain grave doubts as to his sanity. Although you will find him the very best fellow in the world; trustable as the day, except when he takes one of these spells. Then you want to watch him; but to be truthful, this is the first one he has ever had," and he kissed her again as he released her hands. Turning to Jack, he entwined his

arms around his cousin and kissed his cheek, in the most affectionate manner possible.

"I am delighted, old boy. Let me congratulate you, now that you are safely anchored at last."

At first Mrs. De Mar was disconcerted somewhat by this young cousin, so full of life, bubbling over with fun. She would probably have been less so if there had not been a number of gentlemen and ladies in the room as spectators, of whose presence, however, neither the Doctor nor Dick appeared to be conscious, so thoroughly at home were they. She had never been at such a large and fashionable hotel before; but very soon Doctor Jack and his cousin had made her perfectly at her ease. Furthermore, she began to be reassured on a point that had given her some little anxiety—that was, as to how she would be received by these rich, and as she half-suspected, proud Southerners. More than once she had asked herself if she had not made a mistake. Sure she was of her husband—there never was a shadow of doubt there. And now that this cousin who was so very nice to her, without appearing to do so, made her feel perfectly at her ease, her confidence grew as to how it would be at his home. In consequence of this assurance, her spirits rose, and she became as lively and bright as if she had never known any other life than this. She and Dick soon became fast friends. He entertained her, telling her about her future home and its surroundings. Her only trouble was in knowing exactly when he was jesting and when he was not.

"You must not become discouraged when you first get down to Sandy Flat. Did you know that

was the name of your future home? No? Well, it is, and it describes it to a T. There is more sand down there than Carter had oats. Are you fond of horseback riding? That is good. We all ride horseback down there a great deal. Did you ever ride a mule? No? You have seen them, have you not? Only a few? Well, you won't see much else down at Jack's. He has more mules than anything else. They are not so very hard to ride after you once catch on, how to hold on. You will not be down there twenty-four hours before he will have you out. Then there is fox-hunting, that is fun, going for the fences and gullies and all sorts of things, at break-neck speed. Oh, but it is fun!"

"You are guying me, aren't you?"

"Not at all. Hasn't Jack told you all about it?"

"I am afraid not."

"Whatever have you and he been talking about all this time? Seems to me that you are going it blind."

"It does, indeed, look that way," said she, laughing.

"Well, don't get the blues about it. You can rejuvenate things at Sandy Flat, and put some life into it. Yonder he comes, he must not catch me telling tales out of school."

CHAPTER XXVI

After dinner Dick informed his cousin that he had procured a box at the opera. Orfeo was to be rendered.

"You have heard it, Jack, I believe. And you, Lil, have you heard it? Yes? That is fortunate. I shall place myself in your hands. I am all right as to the music; not that I know all about it, except that I can tell when it tickles my fancy, as well as the next one. I tried to get a libretto and post myself; but it was so late, and I did not want to miss your arrival. I am glad that you are up on Italian."

"I would not put it that strong," said Mrs. De Mar. "I can follow and catch on to the meaning; that is all."

"Well, that is all right. We will hit the high places," said Dick.

"I will go and get ready," said the lady. "You and Jack can have your cigars, and then you will not think that it takes me so long." The cousins went with her as far as her room door; and then passed on to Dick's room, where they sat down for a smoke and a chat.

"Did you bring some Havana Plantations with you? It is difficult to get a real good cigar here. My supply has run out some time since. I have smoked a good deal lately."

"Then things have not been running exactly smooth with you, I should infer." Doctor Jack shook his head. They sat smoking in silence for some time, the Doctor now and then passing his

cigar close to his nose the better to catch the aroma of the weed. "This is a treat, Dick."

"Jack, I believe that you are a lucky dog," chucking his thumb over his shoulder in the direction from which they had come.

"I know it," said the Doctor, "the luckiest fellow in town. There aren't any more, Dick—the only one. Oh, of course Dell would come in a close second, you know." And the Doctor gave his cousin a pretty thorough account of his ups and downs; how nearly he came to losing her; and how nice and good she was, after she had made up her mind. A newly married couple will talk more freely than they will later on—it all becomes too sacred. Having thought it over, Dick said,

"I wonder, Jack, if it makes much difference, in the end, whether one has a hard time landing his game? First, you are uncertain whether your fly is tempting enough—if there will be a rise or not. Second, after the fly is taken, will the hook hold? How about the line, will it be strong enough? There goes the reel spinning—my, how that rod bends! You believe that it will break. Then it eases up a bit, and you catch your breath. There goes another dash. You make a slip, and there go rod, line and game. You are in despair. Directly you see the end of the rod sticking out of the water, way down stream; you make a dash for it, your eyes all sticking out of your head, your mouth wide open, as you rush after it, in a most undignified way. You throw off your coat and roll up your sleeves, and make a head-end plunge. There, you have recovered it. And so, on and on. Until finally you have worried

the poor thing out of resistance. Then just as you are sure of everything, you get your feet tangled up in the line, and head-over-heels you go; but you hold on like grim death, and come up sputtering and cur—ing. Finally and at last, you stand there with the catch in your hands, your collar unbuttoned and one end of it is sticking up the back of your neck. One of your braces has broken loose, and is dangling down your back; you are dripping from head to heels, with brookwater and perspiration, a sorry sight to behold; but feeling like—‘Big Ike.’ Or take my case; everything lovely, from start to finish. No hurdles, no fences, no ditches, no gullies, no falls. I will wind up in my best evening suit, spic and span; everything just so—not a hair ruffled. I wonder, Jack, if it makes any difference in the end?”

“Well, you see there is one very great difference, Dick, in our cases, and it is a very important difference.”

“What is that?”

“You have had a nice, quiet time; everything the color of the rose—so far—see? You have not landed your game yet; and that makes all the difference in the world.”

“Tut, you can’t scare me; nothing can happen—impossible!”

“I have known the impossible to happen, before to-day,” laughing.

There was a tap at the door: “The lady is waiting in the parlor.” Gathering their hats and coats, they hurried down.

"I regret," said the Doctor, "if we have kept you waiting long."

"I am afraid that it is I who should apologize for interrupting you. You must have so much to say; it has been two years since you have seen each other."

"It was Dick, running on with his foolishness. I only took time to explain a little matter, that was somewhat difficult, on account of its delicacy. You doubtless can guess what it was—we have spoken of it."

"No, really you did nothing of the kind," turning a suffused face to Dick. "He did not tell you, did he—that it was my doings?"

That young gentleman was non-committal—only a quizzical expression that might have meant anything; he was something of an adept at such play.

"You did not tell him; did you, Jack?"

"Not in so many words, exactly."

"He did not tell me anything, Lil; he is only teasing you—the wretch!"

"Honest?"

"Pat," said Dick.

Laughing and joking, they went out to the carriage—happy and all that.

Several times Dick had called Mrs. De Mar Lil, which led him to say,

"Cousin, I have gone off half-cocked, and am calling you nicknames without so much as saying by your leave. Do you mind very much?"

"I will be so glad if you will call me Lil. At home, ever since I was a child, it seems to me, I

have had to be on my dignity. No one ever called me by any other than my full name. It will be such a relief to come down off the stilts, and to be treated like every one else; to take off my shoes and go wading in the creek; to run barefooted on the grass; and—and be called Lil. I am so grateful to you, for having broken the ice for me. I have been wanting to thank you from the first time you did it—it is so kind of you.”

“All right,” said Dick, “I will keep it up and set the pace for the others. Never do you mind, when you get down to Sandy Flat, you can do just as you please, with no one to say you no. I am sure you will enjoy the happy, restful life we have down there. The climate conduces to enjoyment. There is rarely a day when one cannot get out of doors; that, within itself, is enough to make life worth the living.”

“Do you not get tired sometimes of that easy, restful life, as you call it?” said she.

“Not over much,” said Dick, with one of his quizzical smiles. “If we do, then we go and do something and take a rest, until we tire of that; then we go back where we started and take that kind of a rest. See? That is all there is to it. We won’t make you do anything; nor will we make you do nothing. Could you find it in your heart to quarrel with that?”

“Not at all,” she said, becoming aware that they were approaching dangerous ground.

Just as they had taken seats in their box the curtain went up.

"The tomb of Eurydice," said Mrs. De Mar to Dick. "There is Orpheus, lying down beside it."

"Listen," said Doctor Jack, "at that cry 'Eurydice' in deepest agony."

"I see," said Dick, "Orpheus is lony about the girl. The same old story—eh, Jack?"

"She-e-e-e," said the Doctor. "He says life will be impossible without her."

"Very likely," said Dick, "that is the proper thing to say. Don't you think so, Lil?"

"He will cross the dark Acheron in quest of her," said Mrs. De Mar.

There was the flashing of lightning and the deep roll of thunder.

"Neither of you need tell me what that means—it means rain. Did you bring your goloshes, Lil?"

Amore appears—"What has that chap to do with it?" asked Dick.

"He is telling Orpheus," said she, "that Jove has been moved by his sorrow, and names the conditions upon which he can recover his beloved."

"He will do it," said Dick, "if he is the man I take him to be."

"You know, if Orpheus looks back upon her before he passes the river Styx, he will lose her."

"I tell you, that is a bad river; I would not bet on him."

And so throughout Dick kept up his running fire of raillery, until it came to the chorus "Love triumphs." "And," said Dick, "they lived happily together ever thereafter."

They returned to their hotel, chatting and laughing; not a care—save Dick's longing for Dell.

"May I ask," said Mrs. De Mar, "who this Dell is, that you couple with Dick's name so often?"

"Oh, you must wait and see," said that young gentleman, "it is a surprise I had in store for you. To be honest with you, she is my fiancée. It is something of a family secret yet; but as you are one of us now, it is all right that you should know. I shall be terribly disappointed if you two do not take to each other at once. I know that she will fall in love with you at sight, and I shall be terribly jealous."

"You may look to your laurels," she said. "I give you fair warning,—I will supplant you if I can. Do you always sugar-coat your compliments?"

"Well, that depends; some take them sugar-coated, others take them straight."

Dick was a whole-souled young man, whose vivacity made him popular wherever he went. He was thoroughly loyal to his friends. "Love me, love my dog," was one of his favorite mottoes; and it was this that made the Doctor so glad to see his wife and Dick such good friends. If he liked her, he would insist on every one else liking her too. And the Doctor was so anxious that his wife should feel perfectly at home with his family. He knew, of course, that she would be nicely received and all that; but then you know how it is sometimes. A kind of undercurrent as it were. A shrug of the shoulder, when no one is looking. "You can't sometimes always tell."

The next day was spent in shopping—and such shopping as was a revelation to the bride. Sometimes she stood almost aghast. Nothing but the

very best of everything; the price never seemed to enter into any one's head—often was not asked. Presents for everybody; and when presents were purchased for old Aunt Tilly and Uncle Lot, and so on down the list of house-servants, she was utterly amazed. Surely, she thought, this cannot be done just for my benefit—to mislead me. She was not prepared to believe that it was customary for Southerners to buy presents for their slaves; and, moreover, be solicitous that they should be appropriate, and would give pleasure. There was nothing to do but wait and see. She had her misgivings. While the subject of slavery had never been mentioned between them—only the Doctor's letter, which had not been referred to by either; yet, to say that her scruples had been entirely removed, her life-long prejudices entirely overcome, would be misleading and scarcely to be expected.

On the next morning, while at the breakfast table Mr. Dick De Mar said,

"As I missed the marriage ceremony, and as you two are company, and still again, you are going by way of the sea, I have packed my kit, and will take the noon train for the South and Dell."

"What is that? You are going to desert us in this fashion?" said Mrs. De Mar.

"It isn't a matter of desertion at all—a mere going before, to prepare the way, as it were. See the difference? No, I will none of the sea in mine. Suppose, for instance, that it should take a notion and swallow us, who would there be to tell what became of you and Jack? And as a clincher, who would there be to console poor Dell? No, I am very

sorry; but steam, steel, and terra firma is my ticket. I positively refuse to be moved from it."

"Dick, did you put those things for Little Miss Tippers in the trunk, or did they go by express?" said the Doctor.

"They have gone by express," said Dick.

"Then when you get home, please see that they are sent at once to her cottage, with our compliments."

Mrs. De Mar had wondered who this Little Miss Tippers was, for whom so many nice presents had been purchased, and about which the Doctor was so solicitous. She cannot be one of the family—why not? Good-bys were said.

The young chatterbox having left them, the Doctor and his wife began laying out a program for themselves. They missed the boy, as the Doctor called him.

"Well, dearie, what shall we do to-day? We have it all to ourselves; to-morrow we sail."

"Whatever will please you; I have no choice."

"Come, come, that will never do—you must have notions, preferences, likes and dislikes, and all that sort of thing, you know. And you must order me around generally, so that I will feel like I am a married man, and people will not think that we are newly married."

"There will be ample time for that; you are having your day now—just bide a wee."

They spent most of the afternoon strolling through the streets, picking up such things as struck their fancy. Whatever he thought would give her a pleasure, now or when they should get to their

Southern home, he bought with a lavish hand—books, pictures and what not.

“Opera, or theater?” asked the Doctor after dinner.

“Would you mind remaining at home? I am terribly tired this evening.”

“Above everything—an evening with you.”

CHAPTER XXVII

On the following day they boarded their steamer, bound South. The day was perfect. Old Neptune was kindness itself. It had been calm for twenty-four hours, and the poorest sailors were on deck as they passed out to sea.

Procuring a passenger list, the Doctor and his bride were looking it over. There was quite a long list, and they had nearly looked through it when the Doctor came to the name—Mrs. Catsby.

“Here is one I know; but under the circumstances, I am not anxious to renew the acquaintance. She is an exceedingly nervous person, and not less peculiar. We would not mind her for a few hours; but three or four days—that is different.”

Fortune favored them the first day out. They were seated at a different table from Mrs. Catsby, which made it easy for them to keep clear of that lady. As usual, Hatteras was not to be passed without tribute; and the early risers the next morning were mostly glad to return to their staterooms before breakfast had been finished. Among the number was Mrs. Catsby. While the Doctor, of course, was sorry that she had to be ill; but if she needs be, then— The respite, however, was not a continuous contract, it seems; for very soon a stewardess came to him with a message from a lady in No. 24, who wished to see him at once. She had not sent her name, but the Doctor knew, and there was no way out of it.

“Oh, Doctor, I am so glad to see you. I believe

that I shall die. In fact, I had made up my mind to it, when I chanced to see your name among the passengers. Then there was a ray of hope; but oh, I am so sick!"

"I am sorry that you are so ill; but I have something in my stateroom that will relieve you."

"Please do not leave me; I shall die. Can't you send for it?"

Disregarding her entreaties, he went for the remedy and returned with his wife.

"Mrs. Catsby, this is my wife, who will be glad to do anything in her power for you."

"I did not know that you were married," she said, which was the only acknowledgment of the introduction.

"I have only recently married."

"I am extremely sorry," she said. "I fear that your wife will distract your attention from me, and I shall surely die. Is my reticule on that chair?" she said to Mrs. De Mar.

"This?"

"Yes, that is it; thanks. Will you please put it under my pillow; and when I die, take charge of it. Oh, Doctor, I know that I shall die! But I cannot take that medicine. Does it taste bad? I know that it smells horrid."

"No," said the Doctor, "it is not unpleasant to take; it has neither taste nor odor."

"Then it is worthless. Oh, I shall die—I shall die!"

"Let's try it anyway," said the Doctor.

"Dear, did you put my reticule under my pillow?"

"Yes, it is safe," said Mrs. De Mar.

"Will you please hold my hands while I take that medicine? Tighter, please. Now, Doctor, turn your face the other way; I know that I shall make a face when I take it. Don't turn around, Doctor, I know that I am looking a fright, just from smelling it. It smells like—like— Did you ever hear those horrible screech-owls make that peculiar noise? Yes? Well, for all the world it smells just like that; it makes one shiver all over at once."

"Now take the medicine, Mrs. Catsby," said the Doctor.

"Will you please ring for the stewardess?" she said.

When she came Mrs. Catsby said to her,

"Stewardess, they say I must take—I really must take this medicine; and I want you to hold my feet down; for if it does taste bad, I just know that I shall make a face and kick. Hold them tight—just as tight as you possibly can—don't let me kick. Mrs. De Mar, is my reticule under my pillow? Thank you."

"Mrs. Catsby, are you going to take the medicine?" asked the Doctor.

"No, I am not," and she tossed the glass and medicine through the porthole out into the broad, deep Atlantic.

"Won't the lady try a little—just a little hot spiced rum?" said the stewardess.

"That is just the thing that I have been trying to think about all the morning. I was sure the Doctor would think about rum."

"Get her the hot spiced rum, stewardess," said the Doctor. "Spice it well and have it hot. You will

not need us to hold you while you take the rum—will you?”

“That is heartless, Doctor, when you see I am dying. Will you please see if my reticule is safe before you go, dear?”

“Yes, it is safe,” said Mrs. De Mar.

“You have not looked.”

“Odd, isn’t she?” said Doctor Jack.

“Decidedly! The idea of a grown-up woman wanting some one to hold her hands and feet while she takes a dose of medicine.”

“And then not to take it.”

“She is certainly an oddity.”

“She is an oddity in many respects,” said he, “and is continually developing some new and unexpected traits of character. At another time she would have taken the medicine without a word; but she would have said or done something quite as absurd. With all that whimsicality she is cool and level-headed on occasion.”

“Who is she?”

“She came down from the North in answer to an advertisement by Mr. Catsby for a housekeeper. He had come South from Connecticut, I think—peddling clocks. By his tact, energy, economy, strict attention to his business, together with a reputation for honesty, he gained the confidence of the people. He was very sociable, and was good company. He fortunately secured the friendship of an old gentleman, whose wife and child had died, leaving him entirely alone—a Mr. Cabble. He was a man of means and let Mr. Catsby make his house

his home, having his company for his keep. Gaining the confidence of the old gentleman, he bought his plantation and negroes, to be paid for in ten annual instalments. Mr. Cabble intended to spend his time in travel; but he kept putting it off from time to time, until one day he dropped over dead. Mr. Catsby being left alone, advertised for a housekeeper, with the result of employing Jerusha Tedder, spinster, from Bucks County, Pennsylvania. An amusing circumstance led to his making her his wife. Occasionally—and only occasionally—Catsby would get a ‘spell of drinking’; and he would not stop as long as there was a drop remaining on the place. Miss Tedder had been established only a few months as housekeeper when Catsby took one of his spells. He had reached his last bottle. The thoughtful housekeeper had decided that it would be best to keep a wee drop in the house, in case of sickness, for instance. And, moreover, she decided that he had been drinking long enough. So she drove the cork home in the last bottle and then hid the corkscrew. Now Catsby never lost his legs, regardless of the amount of whiskey he had imbibed. On this morning he came blundering into the dining-room to tap his last bottle. He found it in its right place, but not so the corkscrew.

“‘Where is that infernal corkscrew? It is always getting out of pocket, just when I need it. I am going to buy a gross of them. Tedder—Tedder—TEDDER!’ his voice rising with each repetition of that lady’s name. ‘Where in the thunder is that woman?’ She was safe within a closet with her hands pressed over her lips, watching Catsby.

“ ‘Tom—Tom—Tom!’ he yelled.

“ ‘Sah,’ answered a half-grown darky.

“ ‘Come here this minute, you black, smoot ball of a rascal. Where is that corkscrew, I tell you?’

“ ‘I don’t know, sah.’

“ ‘Get it, and be quick about it, or I will take your jacket off; do you hear?’

“ ‘Yaas, sah.’

“ ‘Have you found it?’

“ ‘No, sah; I can’t find it nowheres at all.’

“ ‘Where is Miss Tedder, then?’

“ ‘I dunno, sah.’

“ ‘What in the devil and Tom Walker do you know?’

“ ‘I dunno, sah.’

“ ‘Find her and ask her where that damned corkscrew IS. I am going to buy a gross of them, and I’ll have six in every room in the house. I’ll put one in every one of my pockets, and—and—and I’ll put one in each of Tedder’s ears for earrings.’ After so long a time Tom returned without either. Catsby was sitting in the baywindow of the dining-room with his last bottle clasped between his hands.

“ ‘Can’t you find that woman?’

“ ‘No, sah.’

“ ‘I’ll get me a gross of women, too; and—and—and I’ll put the last one of them in a bag, and throw them into the river!’

“ ‘Thinking profoundly—that is, as profoundly as a drunken man could think—he looked up at Tom, with a liquor-sogged smile on his face, and in a voice as near like that of a suckling dove as he could muster, said,

“ ‘Come here, Tom—you are a good boy—can’t you get that cork out in some way?’ ”

“ ‘No, sah; I don’t supposen I can.’ ”

“ ‘Don’t you think you could suck it out, Tom? See if you can’t. Suck harder—harder. You aren’t half sucking hard enough.’ The boy had sucked until his cheeks had long since collapsed and his eyes were bulging from their sockets.

“ ‘Go bring me a wet towel, you can’t suck worth a cuss!’ When the wet towel was brought, he proceeded with drunken gravity to wash off the neck of the bottle. When that was done, he applied himself to the task of sucking, but with no better success than Tom had. Taking it from his mouth, he eyed the bottle from every point of view. Then he stared at Tom, but deriving no inspiration from that source, he scrambled to his feet and pulled off his coat, rolled up his sleeves and applied himself anew to the task of sucking. At last putting the bottle down on the floor, he stood with his arms akimbo and his feet well apart looking straight at Tom. Tom stood the ordeal for full a minute, when the corners of his mouth began to encroach upon territory set apart for the exclusive use and behoof of his ears, which Catsby observing, said,

“ ‘Tom, what are you laughing at?’ ”

“ ‘I isn’t er laughin’, boss.’ ”

“ ‘Tom!’ ”

“ ‘Sah.’ ”

“ ‘Tom, I am just obliged to have that whiskey. Can’t we think of some way of getting at it?’ ”

“ ‘I dunno, sah, ’ceptin’ we wuz ter push it in; mighten we do dat?’ ”

“‘Tom, you are a treasure. What made you think of that? Certainly; push it in; but don’t spill any of the liquor.’ As Tom began to push, Catsby thought that it was going to be an easy job, and took the bottle away from the boy.

“‘Give it to me, Tom, you might spill some of it with your awkwardness.’

“He took the bottle, and placing it between his knees began to push at the cork with his finger. It did not move.

“‘Lemme try, boss.’

“‘Take care, nigger! Let me put it down on the floor where I will have a better purchase.’ Suiting the action to the word, he placed the bottle on the floor, and began to push at the cork again. All at once in went the cork and the finger followed it, and so tightly wedged did it become, that he could not withdraw it, pull and tug at it as he might. The perspiration began to pour down his face and neck.

“‘Tom!’—

“‘Sah.’

“‘It looks like my finger was fast.’

“‘Yaas, sah; it do kinder look so fur er fack.’

“‘What are you going to do about it, Tom?’

“‘I dunno, sah.’

“In looking out of the window for an idea, he saw the field-hands coming in for dinner.

“‘Tom, run and tell big Sam to come here.’ In giving the message, the others heard that their master was in some kind of trouble, and several of the older ones came too.’

“Sam, I have got my finger fast in this bottle

neck. How shall I get it out? You are a pretty good mechanic, are you not?"

"'Yis, sur; but I don't know nothin' erbout git-tin' fingers out uv bottles. Cain't yer pull hit out?"

"'No, Sam, I have tried that until I have pulled nearly all the skin off my finger.'

"'Lemme see, boss,' said Sam, and he took the bottle and finger in his hand and began pulling, until Catsby cried out with pain.

"'S'pozen yer unscrew it kinder,' said Alec the blacksmith. He came in and began turning the bottle-neck, but without avail.

"'Yuz er tu'nin' hit de wrong way,' said one of the bystanders.

"'You shut up,' said Alec, 'you s'pose I don't know which er way ter tu'n er thing ter unscrew hit. Yo' mouf is too big anyway. Git me some soap.'

"Everybody's face brightened at the idea of soap, and Catsby wondered why some one had not thought of soap before. 'Hurry up,' said he, 'I am afraid my finger will swell up in there.'

"'I don't see,' said Alec, 'how hit could swell up in dere'; but when the soap was produced it was found that it could not be applied where it would do any good. So when the soap failed there was a general sense of depression all round.

"'Hit would be er monst'ous pity ter hev yer finger cut off,' said Alec, 'an' hit's he right finger at dat.'

"More than once the thought of losing his finger had presented itself to Catsby's mind, but on each occasion some new expedient had been suggested, and that had driven it out of his mind. For instance,

the cook had suggested giving him some catnip tea as being good for almost anything. Then she proposed a mustard plaster to the back of his neck, to draw the blood away from the finger. Another old mama thought that it would be a good idea to rub the bottoms of his feet with goose grease, and then toast them at the fire. Still another knew of a child's life being saved when everything else had failed by putting an onion poultice behind the ears, and she came in with a couple ready to apply; but old Uncle Sol pushed her back, saying,

" 'Thur right thing ter do, is ter put er terbacker poultice over de pith of he stomic. Hit'll mek 'im monst'ous sick, but hit'll mek his finner swivel up so yer can pull hit out.' Many other suggestions were made. Alec said that he had never heard of anybody getting their finger fast in a bottle before.

" 'I has,' said old Uncle Sol. 'I knowed er nigger onst who got he finner in er bottle—jes' like dat—an' it stay dere, an' it stay dere, until he tuck de lock-jaw, an' he died de most frightfulest death, havin' fits an' things an' cussin' an' er swearin'. An' 'twas said dat it wuz because dere wuz whiskey in de bottle dat made him die such er turr'ble death. De preacher said it wuz "Old Harry" dat wuz atter 'im.'

"Under all this fire, Catsby was getting exceedingly nervous. Besides, the whiskey was beginning to die out, and that added to his nervous state. He began to whimper. Miss Tedder thought that it was time she should put in an appearance. She came running into the room.

"'Dear me, Mr. Catsby, whatever can be the matter? Have you hurt yourself? I am so sorry. How did you hurt yourself? Did you fall up the steps?'

"Touched by her kind, sympathetic voice, he broke all up and cried and boo-hooed right out, as though he didn't care who heard him.

"'Yer see, Missis,' said Alec, 'he's got his finger fass in er black bottle, an' cain't git hit out 'ceptin' ter cut it off.'

"'Of course,' said Miss Tedder, 'it will not do to let the finger stay in the bottle neck. The circulation will stop and then mortification will set in. At the same time it would be a great pity to have the finger cut off—and it is his right hand at that.' The while she was looking most disconsolate. Mr. Catsby stopped crying, and looked up into her kind face—it looked exceedingly kind to him then—and asked,

"'Shall I send for a doctor, my dear Miss Tedder?'

"'Not just yet. Tom, go and bring me the small tack-hammer, and tell the cook to send me a sad-iron and the dishpan.' When they were brought, every one stood open-mouthed in wonder as to what she was going to do.

"'Now, Alec, hold the iron under the neck of the bottle. Put the dishpan on the floor under it.'

"'What is the dishpan for?' asked Mr. Catsby.

"'To catch the whiskey, if any should spill.'

"'Damn the whiskey!' said Mr. Catsby. 'I will never touch another drop as long as mice eat cheese,' and he kicked the pan across the room.

"A gentle little tap with the tack-hammer on the neck of the bottle—ting—and it was done. Catsby

sprang to his feet, and before Miss Tedder or he knew what was happening, he was embracing her, and kissing her cheek, and pouring out his thanks, protesting that she had saved him from lockjaw and death generally. In the mean time, she was struggling to free herself. When he did become conscious of what he was doing, he drew back, saying,

“‘Forgive me, Miss Tedder; I did not mean the least disrespect to you. I have the most profound admiration for you. And I want to beg your pardon for ever having considered you an ordinary woman, and with no higher thoughts than how the dinner was to be served, while you really are a woman of extraordinary parts—a genius—equal to the most trying emergencies. Again I beg your pardon.’ He had been holding her hand in spite of her efforts to free it. Now she broke away, and ran out of the room.

“‘Within a month they were married, and lived happily together until he died, leaving her his entire fortune.’”

CHAPTER XXVIII

On the same evening Doctor De Mar and his wife were sitting alone at the port rail of the promenade deck, looking at the vast expanse of water. Night was setting in, and the full moon was coming up out of the waves. As she rose higher and higher, her soft, tremulous light glinted along their tops. Higher and higher she takes her way. The light path widens and widens, and reaches out from their feet to where the sky and water meet. A soft gentle breeze coming in from the southeast played with the bride's fluffy hair, as a kitten plays with a thistle-down—a play which the Doctor watched with intensest pleasure.

"Dearie," he said, taking her hand in his, "is not our happiness complete?"

For an answer she closed her fingers around his more firmly, though she took not her eyes from the moon and the waves. "Is there something—one single something—wanting?"

Slowly turning her face to him, she said:

"As gold, for practical purposes, must have some harder, baser metal combined with it, so happiness—human happiness—must needs have some alloy to save it from soft insipidity. Is it not so, my husband?"

It was the first time that she had called him *husband*—a word than which none sounds so sweet to a newly married man. He had been waiting and listening for it days and days, and now that he thought there was something—a vague idea it was—that

was wanting, this calling him husband was reassuring and doubly precious. For some moments they were silent, as was often their wont; the moon, the waves, the gentle breeze, and these two.

"I thought, my wife, that my happiness was complete. It needed that dear word—just that dear word," and his free hand patted—oh, so tenderly, her fair, round cheek.

"Was not that missing word," she said, "an alloy; only you were not aware of it? So you see, we need not of necessity be aware of the baser metal; and not being aware of it, our pleasure is not qualified by it."

"If only I could know that you were perfectly happy."

"I had never considered that state possible in this life," she said.

Again they sat thinking it out.

"It seems to me," he said, "that we would necessarily know what was wanting to make us happy—perfectly happy, if you prefer."

"Scarcely necessary."

"A thing of which one is unconscious could not affect one's perception, I ween."

"It is possible in any event that there may be something which we are unwilling to believe indispensable to our happiness, which in fact is so."

"Possibly. Dearie, is there something of which you are conscious that is wanting to make you happy, or to make your happiness complete?"

"Jack—my dear husband—I am happy; happier than I had ever dreamed that I could be in this

world. Let that satisfy you. I am content. I am happy!"

"Dear, you have never referred to my last letter in any way; was that letter satisfactory? If you had prejudices, did that remove them?"

"Doctor, you and I cannot afford to be otherwise than perfectly candid with each other; can we?"

"Most certainly not."

"You must know how difficult, nay, impossible, it is to uproot at one fell swoop prejudices—if you prefer to call them that—which have grown up with us from earliest infancy; convictions that we have never heard gainsaid. Even when the judgment has been convinced, that first training, those fast-grown ideas, will remain in spite of any effort we may make. Dear, I should never have brought up this subject. I made up my mind to that when—when I scattered those violets where I knew you would find them, with the hope that they would carry some silent message from my heart to yours."

"Then you did scatter them upon the knoll?"

"Who else would have cared to do so? But, husband, as you have brought up this subject, once for all let's settle it—if not the subject-matter, a course of action with reference to it. Whether I consider slavery right or wrong has nothing to do with it; whether I believe the slave-owners responsible for slavery, is quite another thing. I do not believe that you individually are responsible. I am thoroughly convinced of your honesty and uprightness, your truthfulness and kind-heartedness. If I were not, I would not have been here to-night as your wife, but back in my humble home heart-sore and miserable,

because I had learned to—shall we not leave something to the imagination?”

“No, nothing to the imagination to-night, dear.”

“Then, because I had learned to love you as—as I never could have loved any one else. I never should have loved any one else. How could I, dear, having known you?” and her arm slipped around his neck and she kissed his cheek. “Feeling that way, I trusted you entirely. I could not believe that you were doing an intentional wrong. Then I persuaded myself that I would not be doing a wrong to come with you down to your Southern home, and with you do what we could to mitigate the poor negro’s sufferings—if sufferings there were.”

“That is all right, barring the compliments to myself. But let me say something to you, and be sure that I mean every word of what I shall say. I have no doubt but that you have been taught to think that our slaves were captured and torn away from their families, and forced into slavery by us; that we have to watch them to prevent their escape and gaining their freedom; something to which they are looking forward and pining for, above everything in the world. Now, dearie, this is what I want to say to you: I have quite a number of slaves, and vast quantities of land that would be worthless without them. If you find one single negro that wishes to be free, we will free him; or, if there be any number of them, you may free them.”

“The laws of your State would not permit that.”

“The laws of my State would not permit me to free them within its lines; but it does not prevent

any one from taking his slaves into what are called free States and freeing them."

"But if you were to free a part of them, a great many others might ask it. I would not impoverish you while every one else held his property."

"Well and good—I would not be impoverished. I have sufficient means independent of them to keep us from want. Besides, what are slaves and land in comparison with your happiness—which means my happiness, dear—I love you so!"

"My precious husband!"

CHAPTER XXIX

It was a lovely afternoon. The morning had been quite cool for the locality at this season of the year. Uncle Lot was "almost shore" that he saw frost on some pine straw when he got up. It "wuzn't clare daylight tho'," and he "wuzn't perfec' shore erbout it." The old man was not to be caught, he prided himself upon the accuracy of his statements.

"We hain't dug our pertaters yit, but Marse Jack an' de Missus is er comin' home ter-day er ter-morrer, an' I's had everybody cleanin' up spic an' span, 'cause Marse Jack don't like ter see things all whapper-jawed an' outen place. Yer knows, Marse Dick, he holds me 'sponsible fer everyt'ing, whether he's yere er summers else."

"Oh, well, Uncle Lot, Jack is stepping so high, now that he is married, I am afraid that he will not see even you," said Mr. Dick De Mar.

"Don' yer fret yerself, Mars Dick. Marse Jack'll see Lot 'fore any odder nigger on his place; an' he'll shake han's wid 'im too. Marse Jack steppin' high, nuthin'! Chile, I raised Marse Jack, mostly; an' I raise 'im ter step jes' like Ole Massa—jes' so," and he demonstrated by taking three or four steady, dignified strides across the lawn.

"Well, Uncle Lot, you must have everything in apple-pie order. You must have the carriages and horses looking their best."

"Shore, Marse Dick. Come right erround ter de stables, an' let me show yer. Yer can see yerse'f in 'em."

They were starting to the stables, when Lot saw Little Miss 'Tippers drive up to the gate.

"Lemme run an' open de gate fur Missis. I don't know whur dat scamp Jim is. Dey's all run plum crazy, 'cause Marse Jack done ma'ied er New Yawk lady; like Marse Jack couldn' ma'ied anybody he pleases, ef he wanted ter. I'll hev ter kill erbout half dese niggers yit, fore we's done wid it."

He hurried off to the gate as fast as his old-time legs would carry him.

"Good afternoon, Uncle Lot. How are you to-day?" was her greeting.

"I's middlin' well, Missis—middlin' well, I thanks yer. Marm Tilly wuz jes' wishin' fur yer ter come erround. Drive right up ter de house; Marse Dick is up dere."

"Ah, here we are," said Dick. We are always at the right place at the right time. Glad to see you. I thought I would run over and see if everything was in ship-shape for Jack and his wife, or rather for Jack; I'll leave it to you to look after whatever may be necessary for the lady's comfort. You will like her, Miss 'Tippers. She is not pretty like Fan—that you know would not be easy; but she is all right and suits Jack to a *t*. I like her immensely. There is no foolishness about her, don't you know? I do hope that Dell will like her. Jack is awful struck. Miss 'Tippers, everybody knows that I am backing up Jack, and therefore I would not likely hear any criticisms, if there were any."

Dick's last remark did not exactly take the form

of interrogation; he simply left it open. It was useless.

"Doctor Jack's wife will be treated with every consideration and kindness; there can be no doubt as to that," she said.

"Of course, I know that; but I am not so sure as to what may lie below the surface—she is not of our blood; you know the De Mars—she is a Northerner, possibly with Abolition notions. You know what that would mean."

"Doctor Jack would not lose sight of these things, if they were objectionable—to a degree," said Little Miss Tippers.

"When a man is daft about a woman, as Jack is about his wife, he is liable to make a mistake; and see things from a different point of view from others; don't you think so?"

It did not avail—he ought to have known better—Little Miss Tippers was not to be sounded. No one knew this better than Dick, and, therefore, he felt safe in saying to her what he would not have said to any one else. As for himself, he had not a doubt concerning Jack's wife. She was all right.

"I see Marm Tilly telegraphing for me," she said. "Excuse me. Shall I see you again before I go?"

"Yes, I'll wait. I want to look after the horses and traps."

Little Miss Tippers looked through the house with Marm Tilly, giving hints here and there, when she had overlooked anything.

"You want to start fires in all the rooms, night and morning. The house has been closed up, in a way, for so long a time."

"Lawdy, Honey, I's got kin'lin' wood in ebbery one uv 'em jes' ready ter tech er match ter 'em; but I'll do jes' as yer say. Hit's shore er long time since white folks been 'joyin' deirselves in dis house. Poor old Massa an' Missus!"

"Everything seems all right, Aunt Tilly."

"Thank yer, Missis, I'm mighty glad ter hear yer say dat. Ef Marse Jack had er ma'ied some uv our own people, I'd er knowed 'zactly what ter do an' how ter do hit; but when hit comes ter New Yawk folks, I don't know."

"Just go right straight ahead, as you would do for any of your own people, and it will be all right. She will be mistress here, and give orders if she wants things changed. She is a lady, or your Marse Jack would not have married her."

"Thank yer, Missis—thank yer. Yer shore taken er big load offen my mind. I's heard dat some uv dem Northern folks wants ter be quality wid us niggers, an' then 'spects ter be quality wid de white folks. I knows dat ain't gwine ter wuck. White folks is white folks, an' niggers is niggers. De Lawd made 'em so, an' yer cain't change er lippard's spots, do what yer will—Northern folks er no Northern folks."

"Now I will go," said Miss Tippers, shutting off Aunt Tilly, who did not always know exactly when to stop when once underway. "You have managed very nicely indeed, and you will get on with the new Missus."

"Thank yer ergin, Missis. Won't yer come ter-morrer an' sorter count'nance things. Maybe she would rutlier see some white folks erbout her."

"No, Aunt Tilly, I am not the one. I think Mrs. Chatham Jack will be here to receive her."

"Dat's so, Missis. Yer knows what is properest ter do fer New Yawk ladies. I'm mighty glad yer cum."

When Little Miss Tippers came out of the house, she found Dick waiting for her on the veranda.

"I hope you found everything as satisfactory within as I have found them without," said that young gentleman.

"Everything is as nice and neat as could be," said Miss Tippers. "Aunt Tilly is a treasure."

"Will you not have a chair and rest?"

"No, I thank you; I must be going," said she. She was not to be trapped into a long conversation with Dick in his present mood. What she knew or what she thought, if anything, was not to be repeated.

"Then I will ride too," said Dick, who was not to be thrown off so easily.

Assisting her into her phaeton, he mounted his own horse and rode away with her. Finally he said,

"Miss Tippers, I am sure that Jack's wife will be received all right, but I am not so sure that there is not some undertow against her. While no one has intimated anything of the kind to me, yet in some quarters I imagine that there is not much enthusiasm, and I regret to say, in a quarter where I was most anxious that it should be different."

"Mr. Dick," she began, after a moment's hesitancy, "one's zeal sometimes thwarts the end that one most desires. You have been unqualified in

your admiration for Doctor De Mar's wife, and is it not possible that that has aroused some little jealousy? You do not mind my saying that?"

"Not at all, I wish people would talk right out like that. Even Dell is non-committal. Her father simply shakes his head, which I think is worse than open opposition, and I said as much to him. The old gentleman did not like it, neither did Dell."

"Would it not be better, Mr. Dick, not to say anything—I mean more than might be absolutely necessary? It is a very old saying, and like good wine loses nothing by age, 'The least said, the soonest mended.' You are not seeking a rupture with Dell, I am sure."

"Heaven forbid!" said he. "I would not have any trouble arise between us—even temporarily—for any consideration."

"Remember, 'The least said—' Good-by, here our ways part."

"Good-by, Miss Tippers. You will like Jack's wife—won't you?"

"Yes, I am sure of that."

"But you like everybody."

CHAPTER XXX

Alone—all alone—shut out from all the world besides. No human eye to see—no human ear to hear. Alone—all alone—save her God and herself. Surrounded by every luxury that wealth and refinement of the highest order could provide; in her lone room she sat. A spacious, airy room it was. The large, low windows looking out over rolling lawn and wide spreading fields, white as snow. Hundreds of negroes were busy gathering the fleecy cotton, their rich mellow voices coming up, in the charming melodies they so much love, and in which they do excel. Birds sweetly sang in the clumps of trees here and there. A couple of young fawns, with their white spotted backs, scampered around, darting hither and thither. An old mother dog lay sprawling on the soft, smooth grass, while her brood, with eyes new to sight, tussled and wrestled with each other, tumbling over in their awkward, reckless way, some tugging at their mother's ears with all their might, growling and grunting as puppies will. Without, all was as bright as the morning itself. Within— Pluck thy shoes from off thy feet, and wash thine eyes, thy hands, and thine every thought with holy water. Where thou standest is sacred ground—a maiden's chamber.

Covering the floor was a velvet tapestry, creamy white, with here and there, as if dropped by chance, a bright red rose-bud and a dark green leaf or two. The snowy couch—the cool cane lounge beside a window—two or three comfortable chairs—a small

antique writing desk, with its natty furnishings—a long plate-glass mirror—a dressing case and its et ceteras, in gold and silver and cut glass—a case supplied with choicest books, draped with dainty laces—a center table with its lamp and flowers and magazines—a few pretty water-colors hung on the walls—the windows with prettily draped curtains, all so dainty and sweet and pure. Amidst it all sat Dell, daintier than the daintiest of all her dainty surroundings; beautiful and young, good and true, a dream of all that is fair and lovable. But alas! in tears; in tears over her first sorrow: hurt, and hurt by the one who had won her young heart, by one she loved best of all the world. Ah, how it hurts—this first hurt!

There was a tap at the door.

“What is it?” Dell asks.

“There is some one to see you, Miss Dell,” answered the servant.

“I cannot see any one now.”

“It is Miss Tippers.”

“Ask her to come up at once.”

In a few minutes there was a tap at the door—a tap that was known everywhere Little Miss Tippers was known.

“Come.”

“Oh, my, we have a headache,” said Miss Tippers. “Come here to the lounge. Lie down, and let me bathe it for you with some Florida water.”

Dell put herself in the little lady’s hands, lying down on the lounge and resting her head in her friend’s lap, who bathed her head and toyed with her pretty auburn hair, knowing all the time it was not

her head; that it was her heart that hurt; but Little Miss Tippers was too tactful to say so. Quietly she talked to her patient on indifferent subjects, then she introduced Doctor Jack and his wife.

"Now we must all try to make it pleasant for her. You know that she is a lady, or Doctor Jack would not have married her—a lady worth knowing and cultivating. Dick, you know, has met her, and is anxious that every one should like her. You know how impulsive he is, the dear boy, loyal and true to his friends. He thinks there is no other such man as his cousin Jack, and it follows that he would like his wife, if it were at all possible. Dear old Dick! How fortunate you are to have him as your prospective husband."

Dell turned her face from her little friend.

"I do not believe that he loves me as he used to."

"You silly little puss! Why, only yesterday he was raving about you."

"Honest, Miss Tippers?"

"Honest? Why, of course, honest."

"Then I will not doubt you."

"Neither must you doubt Dick."

"Oh, Miss Tippers, I am so miserable. I was so sure that he did not love me, that I sent back his ring this morning. He did not come yesterday afternoon when I was expecting him. He never did me this way before. He does not love me."

"You silly, hasty girl. Dick went over to Sandowns yesterday afternoon, to see that everything was as Doctor Jack would like it."

"That is just it. He is more concerned for Jack's wife than for me."

"Tut, tut, tut!" she said, which was putting it exceeding strong for good Little Miss Tippers, under the most provoking circumstances. "You have been entirely too hasty. In speaking to me yesterday about you, he said—"

There was a smart rap at the door, interrupting the sentence.

"Will you please see who is at the door. Do not let any one in."

"Please, Miss Tippers," said the servant, "Mrs. Jerix is at the door. Says won't yer come right away—that Solomon has got all mixed up in er cotton gin, and tore all to pieces."

"Good-by, Dell, be sure and meet the boat in the morning," and the little woman ran down stairs and was gone.

"I wonder what Dick said," mused his sweetheart; "anyway, I shall not meet the boat. I am sure that I shall not feel well to-morrow, and that will be ample excuse for me."

CHAPTER XXXI

"Jerry, why are the horses not around at the gate?" asked Dick De Mar.

"Dat wuz jes' what I wuz er comin' eround ter see erbout. Yer ordered de black mares ter de buggy, an' black Kit is hurt her laig," said Jerry.

"Run back and tell Wade to put the sorrel horses to the buggy, and to be lively about it. I have eight miles to drive, and the boat is due within an hour. Hurry, you black rascal, you!"

"Shore," said Jerry as he ran at the top of his speed, "Marse Dick gwine ter give me a quarter, when he calls me er black rascal." Nor was the boy disappointed when he came around with the horses—he got his quarter.

The De Mars had arranged that the whole family should meet the boat and give Jack and his bride a royal welcome. Dick had decided to go over and take Dell to the landing; thus securing the earliest opportunity of talking over matters with her. He had been dumfounded the day before when he received their engagement ring from her. There had not been a word with it. There surely was some mistake. He put the pair of horses to the top of their speed, and reined up at the Park gate, just as the family were coming out to take their carriages.

"Just in time," said Dick. "Good-morning, everybody — good-morning." Looking around, "Where is Dell? I do not see her. She is to drive with me; I came especially for her."

"She is not going," said her mother.

"Not going?" asked Dick.

"She is not feeling well; and says that she would be only a bother."

"Bother? bother nothing. Can I not see her?"

"If you will wait. She has not come down yet," said her mother.

Dick looked at his watch.

"We have only twenty minutes in which to drive to the river. We haven't a moment to spare. Dell could not possibly get ready in that time, could she?"

"No," said the mother.

"I am awful sorry," said Dick, "but I must be at the landing to meet the boat." Touching his spirited horses he was off.

Dell had been a surreptitious witness of what had passed at the gate, and while she had not heard what had passed, she had a pretty fair idea of its tenor. Her heart had beat with wild emotion when he came up, and cried in agony when he drove away.

"He loves me not. He would have come in and waited for me, if he had cared."

Then she chided herself for not going with the others.

"It might all have been mended, if only—" and her sobs shut off the sentence, just as I believe they do the pain.

The boat, as is usual with boats, was a trifle late—just late enough for the tardy ones to anticipate its arrival.

Captain Grizzle, who was an especial friend of Doctor Jack, had his ship tricked out with all the

bunting that he could muster. When the Doctor discovered this he remonstrated with him.

"We have had but a simple wedding, and we are not expecting any one to meet us; so it would be better under the circumstances not to make so much display."

"Not a rag comes down," said the old captain. "I am only sorry that I did not know that you and your wife were to be passengers. I would have had bunting flying from stem to stern. Why, man, you don't get married every day, do you?"

As the boat came around a bend in the river, Doctor Jack and his wife were standing at the prow, and they saw crowds of people and a large number of carriages and horses and servants awaiting them. Handkerchiefs and hats were being waved. As they approached nearer, cheer after cheer accompanied the waving of hats and handkerchiefs. Louder and louder they grew. Captain Grizzle had the bell cord in one hand and the whistle cord in the other, and was making bell and whistle atone for his lack of more bunting. The din was deafening. The Doctor turned and saw tears in his wife's eyes. He tried to laugh, and he tried to say, "Tears, dearie?" But the laugh was a failure, and the tears came into his own eyes, and his convulsed face was speech enough. So he took her in his arms, and kissed her before them all.

Dick was the first one to greet them, and constituted himself master of ceremonies, introducing Lil, as he called her throughout, to her new kinspeople. Every one kissed her, and the kisses were

whole-hearted and warm. Dick's happiness was complete—save Dell.

Old Uncle Lot stood to one side waiting his turn, hat in hand, and his ivories were as bright as his eyes—lighting up his good, honest face. Doctor Jack went over and took him by the hand.

“Come, Uncle Lot, let me introduce you to your young Missus.” As he led him up, he told his wife who Lot was. He made a most profound bow, saying,

“Yo’ most obedient sarvant, Missus.”

“Uncle Lot,” and she said this as if she had been to the manner born, “you shake hands with your master, will you not shake hands with me?” at the same time holding out her hand; and for the first time in her life she shook hands with a negro; and never in her life had she shaken a more honest, faithful one—black or white. Taking her hand in a most respectful way he repeated his formula,

“Yo’ most faif’ful sarvant”; adding, “God bless yer—God bless yer both.”

Dick mounted a horse-block, and without consulting any one, announced:

“PROGRAM.

“To-day—Dinner at Sandowns: Mr. Dick De Mar of The Hickories, officiating for Jack and Lil.

“To-morrow—At Palmettos: Dinner and dancing in the evening.

“The next day—The Hickories: Everybody for breakfast, dinner and tea. Morning, go as you please; evening, dancing. No excuses. No cards. A regular, old-time, De Mar time.”

And so on, down the entire list of De Mars, Dick rattling them off.

He wound up with the announcement that Doctor Jack De Mar at any or all of these gatherings would give a learned dissertation on *fishing*.

It is needless to say that Dick's program was carried out to the full with many additions and frills—saving the dissertation.

Ho for Sandowns!

When the Doctor and his wife were seated in their carriage and on their way home, she asked, "Where was Dell? I do not remember her; there were so many."

"She was not there. Her mother said that she was not well to-day."

"Oh, I am so sorry, on her own account, and especially on Dick's, who was so anxious that I should meet her. We must not forget to express our regrets to Dick."

"Let's wait, it might embarrass him."

"Embarrass him? I do not understand."

"I noticed that while he was apparently full of life as usual to-day, he was not himself. Besides, if she had been simply indisposed, he would have mentioned it himself. If there has been a little tiff, it will be all right between Dick and Dell. They are very much in love with each other; and that being the case, it is bound to come out all right; *vide*—" and he touched her and then himself.

When the time came to break up at Sandowns, that first evening, Doctor Jack took Dick aside and said,

"Say, Dick, is it a case of shirt-sleeves—collar up

the back of your neck—a broken brace hanging down your back—wet with perspiration and brook-water—sputtering and cu—ing?”

“That will do, Jack, I own up. Dell has thrown me overboard. While I have laughed and joked all day, my heart is down in my boots, sore and bruised, and broken. Be merciful, Jack. You and Lil will help me out?”

“No one helped me out,” said Jack, with a lugubrious face and voice. “Where is Little Miss Tippers? She was not at the boat to meet us.”

“She would have helped me, and made it all right. She went over there yesterday for that purpose but just at the critical moment that tow-headed, pigeon-toed Solomon Jerix got mixed up in a cotton gin, and of course had to send for Little Miss Tippers to nurse him. I don’t think that she has finished gathering up the scraps of him yet; and unless he kicks the bucket, there is no likelihood of her getting away from there for days. In the mean time, I can’t stand this kind of thing; I have been seriously contemplating the river or a rope—nothing has saved me, except this want of decision as to route,” said Dick, unable to repress his fun, even in so serious a matter as this was to him.

“Well, Dick, we will take it under advisement. Don’t go into the river. You will only spoil your clothes; and when we fish you out, you will look like a drowned rat, and Dell will laugh at you. As for the rope—tut!—any fool can hang himself—it’s common—don’t disgrace the family, by hanging yourself—that is the very last resort. Be a man, and keep a stiff upper lip; and maybe it will all

come around right—we will hope so anyway. 'Though it can't be a case of 'dress suit,' it seems."

"Come, Jack, you are guying me unmercifully. This is no joking matter; you and Lil will help me—I'll depend upon you."

"Good-by and good-by."

Lest I weary you beyond human endurance, we will not follow them through the round of gaities that held sway among the De Mars, according to Dick's program. When it had been going on for days and days, Mrs. Jack asked Dick how long this was to last—when it would end?

"End!" exclaimed he, "I do not understand you. End? There is no end. Did you think that it would wind up with an exhibition, and speeches and things, or that there would be a big explosion, or some such catastrophe to end it? Nothing of the kind—there is no end. When you get tired, you just side-step—drop out, and take it up again when you feel like it—that is all. You know we promised you that we would not make you do anything, nor would we make you do nothing."

CHAPTER XXXII

The reception of Doctor Jack's wife had been as warm and generous as De Mar hospitality could make it; and that was saying a good deal. She was received first out of consideration for Doctor Jack, and later, for her own sterling worth. Everything conspired to make her happy and contented, which, in turn, placed her at her very best before them. It was the general verdict that Jack could not have done better. No one was warmer in this endorsement than Miss Fannie De Mar. The two became the staunchest of friends.

Doctor De Mar and his wife had been at home for some months, when one day they had just returned from a ride to one of the lower plantations on the river, and were sitting on the veranda resting. She had on her riding-habit, which was extremely becoming to her. She had never looked better than she did this particular day. Her residence in Carolina, with its outdoor exercise, had agreed with her wonderfully well, and had brought bright roses to lips and cheeks. When she first came she required assistance to mount her little Kentucky-bred Doe. Now she could grasp the horn of the saddle and spring to its seat, with an ease that was charming to behold. They were a distinguished-looking couple as they sat there, that bright spring day.

The political troubles brewing between the sections were beginning to agitate the public mind, but were rarely discussed, if one might call it discussion, between these two. Occasionally it had been spoken

of incidentally—that was all. On this particular morning something suggested the subject, and Mrs. De Mar asked,

“If, as you think, husband, this agitation is likely to result in serious trouble,—possibly war,—would you not apprehend trouble with the negroes?” She did not of late speak of them as slaves very often.

“Not at all,” the Doctor replied. “On the other hand, they would become a source of strength. They would produce the necessary supplies for the army. They would take the field if permitted to do so, in a very great many instances; but Southern chivalry would never place an inferior race in a position of danger, side by side with gentlemen. We would rather lose our cause than do that.”

“I fear that you are too sanguine, Doctor, in your confidence in them. Are you not?”

“Yonder come a number of them from the fields,” said her husband. “Pick out as many as you like, and ask them if they want to be freed. I will get out of the way, that you may not think that their answers are influenced by my presence,” and without another word he withdrew.

As the hands were filing by the house, she stopped Lot, and told him to have three or four of them come by the veranda; she wished to speak to them. He hastened to comply with her order, and soon returned with four of the men, approaching her with their hats doffed.

“Uncle Lot, I want to ask you a question,” she began; “I want you to answer it truthfully—”

“Sartain, Missus — sartain,” he answered promptly.

"You need not fear to do so. Let your answer be what it may, it will be all right."

"Sartain, Missus—shore!"

"Now, Uncle Lot, would you not like to be free—free as I am, or your Marse Jack?"

"No, no, Missus, I doesn't," he answered instantly. "Dat's de lass t'ing I wants—an' dat's de Lawd's truff."

"Probably you have not thought about it."

"Dat's so, Missus; I ain't t'ought erbout it at all."

"Therefore, you are not prepared to answer so promptly."

"Yes I is, Missus. I ain't got ter think erbout it, ter know dat I don't want ter be er free nigger—no, ma'm."

"Why, Lot, you would be your own man, to come and go as you like—when and where you pleased—think of it, now."

Lot wrinkled up his forehead; blinked his eyes as fast as ever he could; drew his finger across his brow very deliberately, as he had seen his old master do when trying to recall something, balancing himself first on one foot and then on the other. The other men found it difficult to restrain a smile, thinking that Lot was cornered for once in his life. The old man thought with all his might and main.

"No, Missus, fore de Lawd, I doesn't want to be er free nigger."

"Why, Uncle Lot, what are your reasons for not wanting to be free?"

The old darky was in his element now; there

were few things that he enjoyed more than a discussion.

“ ’Cause fust, Missus, I don’t like free niggers; I’s got no use fur ’em. In de second place, I never seed one dat wuz any ’count—an’ I does want ter be some ’count. In de third place, who’s gwine ter tek care uv me w’en I’m sick? An’ who’s gwine ter tek care uv me w’en I gits ole an’ cain’t wuck? An’ who gwine ter bury me w’en I dies? I tell you, Missus, who gwine ter do dese t’ings fur me—Marse Jack, shore,” and he laughed, though the tears were in his eyes. “Marse Jack, shore, ain’t gwine er tu’n ole Lot out ter starve yit. No, Missus, I spects ter live an’ die wid Marse Jack. Ole Massa raised me, an’ Marse Jack he gwine ter bury me.”

In substance, she had about the same answers from the others.

“Uncle Lot, how many negroes has your Marse Jack?”

“Lawdy, Honey, I doesn’t beliebe Marse Jack know hisse’f—hunderds an’ hunderds uv ’em.”

“Well, Uncle Lot, out of all that number of slaves—”

“ ’Scuse me, Missus, call us niggers,” said Lot.

“Very well then; of all the negroes your master owns, do you not know one that would like to be free?”

“No, Missus, I doesn’t”; then he looked at the other men and laughed. “ ’Ceptin’ it’s Lazy Mose. Jim, yer s’pose dat Mose like ter be er free nigger?”

“I dunno,” said Jim. “Ef he don’, dere ain’t none.”

"Where is Mose, as you call him?"

"Yonner he comes," said Jim, "er laggin' behin'."

"Lot, tell him that I want to see him, but don't let him know for what," said Mrs. De Mar.

Soon Mose was standing in front of his mistress.

"Your name is Mose, is it not?"

"Yes, Missus."

"Now, Mose, I want to ask you a question, and I want you to answer it truthfully—you need not be at all afraid to do so."

"Yes, Missus," and he looked from one to another, in wonderment as to what it all meant.

"Moses, I have asked this question of Uncle Lot and these other men, and they have answered me, and I believe truthfully, and have given a reason for their answers. Now, Mose, would you like to be free—to be your own man to come and go as you pleased—to do as you please?"

"Yessum," he answered promptly, and his face lighted up.

"What fur yer want er be free?" asked Jim.

"'Cause I won't haf ter wuck." The others could suppress their mirth no longer.

"He's tole de truff dat time shore an' sartain, Missus," said Mike. "Mose hates wuck worse'n pizen."

"Oh, I's got ernother reason," said Mose, "yer needn't ter laugh so soon; I's got ernother reason."

"Well, what is it, Mose: only let it be as honest as the other."

"Hit's de shore truff, Missus. I wants ter be free soze I kin whop Sue whenebber I wants ter, an' ter whop her as much as I wants ter."

"Who is this Sue he speaks of?" asked Mrs. De Mar.

"That's his wife," said Lot.

"He'd beat 'er ter deff long er go, ef hit hadn't ter been for Uncle Lot," said Jim.

"No, I wouldn', nuther," said Mose, "but I'd mek 'er stan' erround w'en I wanted ter."

"That will do," said Mrs. De Mar.

When they were gone the Doctor came out and asked,

"What results, dearie? Are we to give up our negroes?"

"Most wonderful," and she recounted the whole story.

"You will remember that I told you that if any of the negroes wanted to be free that you might free them. Now, I will be as good as my word, and you shall free Mose, and his wife, too, if she wishes it."

"No—the brute! he does not deserve it. The idea of his wanting to be free 'soze' he would not have to work. I wonder how he expects to live?"

"He hasn't expected anything about it," said the Doctor.

"Then as an additional reason, 'soze' he could whip his wife as much as he wanted to. Is she as trifling as he seems to be?"

"I am not sure that I know her; but Lot says that she is a good, industrious woman; but not willing to do all his extra work for him, while he does nothing. Lot has had to stop him from whipping his wife often.

"Now, dearie, while doubtless all my negroes would give you the same answer as these have done,

if you were to ask them, you must know, in order to have a correct idea of the situation, that our slaves know no other free negroes than a thriftless set, that as a class are worthless and greatly disliked by the slaves, who consider themselves better than the 'free niggers,' as they call them. The time is coming when the slaves will be freed, when once we can discover some plan that will not involve too great a hardship to the owners; and what is of quite as much importance, some plan that will not turn loose too great a horde of illiterate and irresponsible people upon society at one time. Some plan will be worked out in due time. However, if they are to be freed by war, it will not be consummated by the aid of the negroes themselves. In the event of war, as I have said before, they will prove an arm of incalculable strength. Doubtless, there are some fanatics who think that in case of war the negroes would turn against their masters, and would murder men, women, and children, right and left. Possibly, in some cases, the wish is father to the thought; but I do not believe that that class is numerous."

"I cannot believe, husband, that there are any who could feel that way about it. Of course, there are a great many who would be glad to see the slaves freed, and who think they ought to be set free; but I cannot think that they would have the white people of the South butchered, in order to accomplish it. It is true, that a great deal of the teachings of enthusiastical Abolitionists are the wildest kind of exaggerations; my personal observations have taught me that. I know of no working class anywhere that is more kindly treated; a

happier people I have never known. I am not at all surprised now at the attachment that exists between master and slave—a claim I have regarded as perfectly preposterous heretofore.”

CHAPTER XXXIII

On a fair sunny coast, looking out over a placid sea, we behold a great number of handsome pleasure yachts. Some are lazily cruising near shore, while others are farther at sea. On one of them, riding at anchor near the beach, were collected a few notable men, several of whom were well-drilled seamen, accustomed to battling with the dangers of wind and wave—wise in the signs of the weather. With age and experience had come wisdom and conservatism. Some were middle-aged; and while they had lost none of their youthful vigor, they were beginning to respect the opinions of their elders, and still others, younger men, were of the company who complacently winked at each other as some old truism was being stated, or some “old foggy” opinion advanced.

“What a perfect day it is for a dash down the sea,” said one of the latter.

“I am not so sure of that,” said old Captain Windson; “this weather is not going to last, or I am much mistaken.”

“There you go,” said the first speaker; “how could you improve the conditions to-day, Captain Windson? There is only a gentle breeze—not a cloud; the day is perfect—bright and fair.”

“But will these conditions last long, think you? I fear not. The wind is fast getting around to the north—a few points more and a nor’easter is possible,” said the Captain.

“We would prove but poor sailors if we were to

hug the shore from fear of simple possibilities," said young Mr. Pertyouth.

"When necessity demands is the time for reckless daring," said the old Captain. "When trouble is brewing, wisdom anchors to the leeward, and without cowardice waits, until the danger is, at least, estimated."

The younger men nudged each other; and while they preserved respectful countenances about it, trod on each other's toes beneath the table.

One of a couple of young sprigs, who were sitting apart, said,

"Sad, is it not? Old Captain Windson is becoming a chronic croaker."

"Yes," said the other, "he used to be one of the most daring sailors on this coast. Age will tell," and he winked at the other, as he tapped his forehead with his finger.

The old Captain, having relighted his pipe, arose and shook down the legs of his trousers, and crossed over and took a look at the barometer; then, resuming his chair, said,

"The storm is brewing. Listen to that low, muttering sound."

"Why, Captain, we have been hearing that old, low, muttering sound for years and years, and nothing has come of it," said one.

"That does not rob it of its significance; it grows nearer and it grows louder. The barometer is falling fast; and as I said a few moments ago, the wind is setting north. Beyond the horizon a cloud is forming. Very soon you will see it looming up, and, mark my word, it will be no child's play."

He and those who thought with him were in the minority, and were the subjects of either commiseration or ridicule.

The cloud no bigger than a man's hand arose, grew and spread. Some laughed in derision; some shouted with delight; while others, older and more thoughtful, stood in little groups, with eyes strained, watching and waiting. The clouds grew thicker and more threatening. A Spirit Wild fanned the winds into maddening whirls, stirring and fomenting trouble, distress—and whatever was to follow. If one dared to doubt or hesitate, he was derided, contemned, browbeaten—a coward. Through the fair Southland, raving and lashing, this Spirit Wild went. At last the thunder opened around old Sumter; and it reverberated throughout the whole country, awakening echoes in every nook and corner of the land. No mountain top was too high, nor darkening gorge too deep; no hovel too humble, no place too lofty or too sacred to escape its pulsing throb—not a soul untouched of its effect. No sea was broad enough to check it, no realm too remote for it to reach; around the world, wherever civilization breathed, its influence was felt.

Of all the stirring scenes—the thousands of exciting incidents—preceding and leading up to the Civil War, who can write? Certainly no one man now. For they cover a field as broad as the Southern States. Every city, every town, every hamlet, and every cross-roads store has its own story to tell; often pathetic and as often ludicrous, though touched with the tragedy of coming events. The

"Minute Men" with their red sashes across their breasts, marching and countermarching, through dust or mud by day, tramping with torches by night, yelling and yelling for Dixie. What inspiring throngs they were! Here a man of splendid physique, stepping as though the earth were not good enough to afford him a footing, a stage too poor for him to tread, with his fine, red silk scarf across his breast, his heart throbbing and swelling with patriotism. Behind him comes some knock-kneed, bandy-legged little fellow, with his red flannel sash of coarsest material; his system swelling with grits, yelling in his screechy little voice with all his might—in the end making as good a soldier as the other—if not better. He is more alert and can lie flatter on the ground under a withering fire.

Here is an orator, stirring the American heart with his bursts of eloquence; there lie his friends from the rural districts asleep—unaccustomed to all night tramps, but quick to awake and yell when the time comes. Here, some long-winded, uninteresting man mounts a dry goods box, and bores the crowd, until they drop away and lie down in some friendly shade, bored—but they are patient with him. Finally, he gets off something that touches the popular chord, and those near him set up a yell. Instantly the others are up and rush forward, yelling—ignorant of what they are yelling about. The women, who are more patriotic than the men, are out in full force. Gathering up their skirts, they go rushing through the sand, or through brushes and briers, to learn what the excitement is about; many with a child or two in their arms and with a half-

dozen or more at their heels—yelling. Yelling, yelling! Everybody yelling, until it crystallized into the Confederate yell, which later on spurred men on to do or die.

Then came the enlisting. I wish I could tell of that. Mothers, sisters and sweethearts were there. Oh, the pathos of it all! Some crying as a loved one steps into line, his face blushing and blanching in turn, but his eyes ablaze with a fire that never dims. Other sweethearts, with flushed faces and flashing eyes, watching some loved one making up his mind. I am not equal to it. I pass.

Then came the Camp of Instruction, with its awkward squad—its drills—its fun—its messes—its boxes from home, with their cakes and pies. Then more fun—and measles; more fun—and mumps; more fun—and frolic. Then the journey to Virginia—an ovation at every stopping, with its ever-present women, to smile and cheer the men on to duty; the lovely girls to beg for soldiers' buttons, until the boys, poor fellows, are reduced to pegs to keep their clothes on, while they are repaid in full with flowers, smiles—and fried chicken. Many of the privates carrying more trunks than a major-general would be entitled to—poor, dear souls, they didn't know any better!

Thousands of men and women are living to-day who lived and acted a part in those stirring days. To recount the deeds of daring—the days of suffering—the wounds—the deaths—the tears and sighs now, would be but to anticipate Time, which is shaping them and crystallizing them into history. They

are all too new and too realistic yet for fancy's dream.

The people with whom we have undertaken to deal—the De Mars—were conservatives. They deprecated the strife, and all that that involved; but when their State moved, there was nothing left for them to do, as good citizens, but to fall into line. Never for one moment did they doubt the rightness of their State's action; they doubted only the wisdom of it. When threatened with force, there were none who sprang more promptly to arms, or wielded them with truer bravery. The State had decided through a convention to protect its sovereignty. Volunteers were called for; and old and young laid down their implements of peace, and seized their swords—the De Mars with the first of them.

Before actual hostilities began, and before all communications had ceased between the sections, Doctor De Mar said to his wife,

“Dearie, there can no longer be any doubt but that we shall have war. That it will be a ninety days' affair, as many think, I do not believe. It will be a very serious war. The North outnumbers us. They have the Army, the Navy, and the organized Government. It matters not that many claim that the war is not for the liberation of the slaves. There is not the slightest doubt about it, and the whole world will be against us. On the other hand, the South, though fewer in numbers, has the better fighting material, because we are more American; and we will be fighting for our constitutional rights—for our homes, our firesides, and our loved ones.”

“Doctor, are you still as confident about the loyalty of the negroes as you were?” she asked.

“Decidedly, yes,” said he; “and what I want to say to you is, that if you would feel safer, or would prefer being North or in Europe, during the strife, you must decide at once, as all communication will soon be stopped. I want you to feel perfectly free to choose. You will be perfectly safe here; but if you have any doubt about it whatever, I would not have you stay.”

They were standing at the library window looking out over the rose garden at the east end of the building. She moved around in front of him, and looking up into his face said,

“Do you want me to go?”

“No, dearest, I do not want you to go; only if you prefer being out of the South during the war, then I should want you to go.”

Taking his hand in hers, she said slowly and deliberately,

“Where thou goest, I will go—thy home shall be my home—thy God, my God—thy country shall be my country. I am incapable of deserting my husband, even if I knew that there was great danger in remaining. If it were permissible, I would march by your side, in defense of whatever you might think were your rights. Suppose you were wounded or sick, dear husband, and I could not come to you. I stay here.”

He took her in his good, strong arms and kissed her, and said,

“I was sure that you would not leave me—that nothing could induce you to leave me. How blessed I am with such a dear, true, little wife! I thank God daily for His gift of you to me.”

CHAPTER XXXIV

If you had boarded a train at Macon, on the Southwestern Railroad in the early 60's, you would have arrived at a little station down in the rolling, sandy, pine woods, which at first glance was devoid of interest. When the train stopped at the little insignificant depot, had you looked to the left, the first thing that would have attracted attention would be a gallows, upon which some poor devil had given up his life before a gaping throng—possibly would have committed under similar circumstances, expiating some crime that nine-tenths of the crowd under the same provocation; there is no telling. Having observed this terrible thing, and having moralized about it, if you had raised the eyes a few degrees they would have rested upon a host of human beings cooped up like so many rats, numbers of whom, doubtless, would have envied the poor wretch who had by way of the gallows passed beyond human justice—beyond the touch of human passion. And you would have perceived a stockade of large timbers driven four or five feet into the ground and extending twelve or fifteen feet above, surmounted by little sentry boxes at regular intervals, in which could be seen, either an old gray-headed man, or a boy innocent of beard, doing sentry duty. They were armed with superannuated guns, and clad with such things from home as most nearly conformed to their ideas of what a uniform should be. There were many other things, to look back at them now, that would have been

highly ludicrous, had it not been for the tragedy interwoven with it all.

The land upon which this stockade was constructed inclined to the south; across the lower third flowed a sluggish little stream, if it could be said to flow at all. Within, forty-five thousand human beings—restless—troubled as the sea. Whatever growth had existed there had disappeared. Here and there a makeshift of a tent or arbor was to be seen; further than that, it was the sun, the rain, and the wind.

If you took the position of one of the sentinels you would see men in all conceivable garbs, from a complete suit of the United States uniform, through the various stages of wear, down to none at all. Here a man of perfect physique swinging along, thrusting the weaker ones out of his way, perchance bullying them, all forgetful of their weakness and misery. There a poor, crawling wreck, tottering on the brink of the grave. A few more days and he will be resting down in the sand—down in the sand! Here a man grown desperate, stepping over the dead-line and jumping back before he can be shot, toying with life as a thing not worth having. There to the left is the crack of a rifle. A youth has shot down a poor fellow who was too slow in jumping back; the sentinel has not exceeded his duty. Probably you would hear some old, gray-headed sentinel begging a foolhardy prisoner to go back over the line, or he would have to shoot him.

“Shoot, old Johnny, I don’t care.” Nor would he listen to any request to go back. Only when he

had exhausted the old man's patience, and saw the gun pointed directly at his breast, would he spring back over the dead-line. Thus desperate did men become, robbed of their reason; reckless, as the result of the horrors of war facing them daily, added to the long, hopeless imprisonment.

Often you might see the gate at the extreme southern angle of the stockade open and admit a man on horseback, wearing a broad-brimmed hat shading a face all bronzed with the southern sun; his hooked nose rising above a tawny moustache, and dividing a pair of small, black eyes, quick and fierce as those of a rat,—his eyes were not blacker than his heart,—the whole face that of a cut-throat villain. As he rides into this crowded inclosure he does not allow his horse to swerve one iota from his course. These poor wretches must hurry out of his way, or they are shot down. Many of them are crazy as loons, as might be expected under the circumstances. The death rate at its worst was about one hundred and twenty-five per day.

Did a prisoner escape during the cover of darkness no alarm was made. Simply the place of escape was marked. The following morning the blood-hounds were put upon his trail, and before sundown he was safely returned to the pen.

One day there was a terrific rain-storm—a day and storm that will never fade from the memory of any one who witnessed it. The little stream that ran by the lower side of the stockade was so much swollen that it washed away several yards of the stockade at the lower side where it emerged. A general alarm was turned in. The firing of a can-

non was the signal to be given, in case of an attempt on the part of the prisoners to escape. The cannon was fired, the long-roll beaten, and the guards all turned out. Forty-five thousand desperate men in prison; a handful of old men and boys their guard; quite a breach in the wall; the deafening thunder; the lighting flashing and the winds roaring—that was the situation. Everything was in confusion. Officers were rushing here and there; horses were neighing and mules braying; drums were beating; bugles sounding; men shouting and cursing; and above it all, the din of the storm. Batteries of artillery were being wheeled into position, covering the breach in the wall.

A peculiar roaring sound came from within the inclosure; the prisoners were rushing and struggling toward the break. They were massed as densely as it were possible for men to be. If the batteries opened upon them now, they would be mowed down by the thousands. The suspense was something awful to endure. Just as the big guns were ready to open fire, and the gunners only waiting for the word, it was discovered that instead of trying to escape, the poor fellows were trying to catch and save the floating timbers and replace them. Think of it! And thinking of it, if no chord of pity in your heart is touched, be assured that no chord of pity is there. That scene was pathetic beyond the power of mere words to tell. To see those prisoners themselves, making superhuman efforts to rebuild the walls that were to stand between them and liberty. It was a God's mercy that they thought as correctly and quickly as they

did; otherwise thousands of them would have been swept down by the first fire, huddled together as they were. And for those who might have escaped, it would have been scarcely better; they were so far from any of their own lines they would have been recaptured after untold sufferings.

It was about this time, after repeated overtures to the United States Government for an exchange of prisoners, without avail, that it was decided to select some of the most intelligent of the prisoners and send them to Washington, to make a true report of the condition of affairs here. Twenty were selected and sent North, with the hope that if the true state of the case were known there would be an exchange. It will be history that nothing came of it. Whatever of blame attaches to the Confederate Government was fully discounted by the action of the United States Government; for there never was a day when an exchange might not have been made, thus preventing untold sufferings of prisoners on both sides.

Were both to blame? Both had their excuses.

The reader has recognized Andersonville Prison, and the demon who paid the extreme penalty upon the gibbet in Washington—a disgrace to his kind. The only saving thought in connection with him is that he had not a drop of Anglo-Saxon blood in his veins.

Now let's draw this black curtain for the sake of humanity.

It was war—and war.

CHAPTER XXXV

There had been some heavy fighting, and, as was usual on such occasions throughout the South, some member of each family went to the post-office to get the mail, too impatient for the last news to wait quietly at home until it could be brought to them. Tellit, the post-office in the De Mar neighborhood, was four miles from Sandowns. There was a large crowd there on this occasion; the excitement was intense. There were hundreds and hundreds of such gatherings at the country offices. They were composed of very young boys, very old men, and of women of all ages. After great battles this would be varied by the presence of men on crutches, or with their arms in slings. It was a rare thing that a young man appeared without one of these badges of patriotism; and if one did, without wound or furlough, he was shunned and made to feel that he was not approved of—save by his own family. The women were always in the majority. Ah, what notable gatherings they were!

On this particular occasion few went unscathed—heart-broken was the rule. Those who had no news tried to console themselves that no news is good news. Those who had news of the safety of their loved ones were saddened in sympathy with those who had bad news. The mail had been distributed and discussed, and the crowd had broken up, going to their respective homes.

Mrs. Jack De Mar had been for the news, and was returning to her home in a light open carriage,

occupying herself reading and re-reading a letter from her husband, giving a graphic account of the recent battle. When within a mile of home, as the carriage was being driven through a dense bay, where the road was quite narrow,—just wide enough for one conveyance,—there was a sudden stir in the undergrowth, which frightened the horses. Coincident with the starting of the horses, Mrs. De Mar was conscious of having been hit by something on her side. The frightened horses had gone some distance before they were quieted. The something that had hit her proved to be a bit of wood with a note attached to it. The driver, turning to see if his Missus had been hurt by the sudden start of the horses, saw her slip the note into her bag. He was too well trained to appear to have noticed it; but he did notice it, and remembered it afterward. If there had been no effort at concealment, doubtless he would never have given it a second thought, then or later.

“If the horses are over their fright, Cæsar, you may let them go faster.”

Away sped the splendid fellows, and they were soon home. Mrs. De Mar hurried to her room. The maid came down later and said that her Missus had retired, complaining of a headache. On the following morning Mrs. De Mar sent for Cæsar and ordered Doe.

“Shall I bring my horse ter go wid you, Missus?”

“No, Cæsar, I will go alone this morning.”

When the horse came, she mounted and rode away in the direction of the post-office. Three hours later she returned and gave the horse to Cæsar.

"You didn' tu'n a hair on Doe dis mornin'. Wasn't she in good shape, Missus?"

"Yes, Cæsar, the mare was all right. I did not ride far. After luncheon you can put Charlie to the little phaeton and bring him to me."

"Yessum."

At the appointed time the phaeton was at the door. The maid brought out a parcel and placed it in the carriage. Mrs. De Mar soon appeared and drove away. Cæsar was troubled, because he had always accompanied his Missus when she rode or drove, following on horseback. On the next day the same thing occurred, except that she drove morning and afternoon, each time carrying a parcel with her, and going alone. On the third afternoon of these occurrences, Sam, the cow-boy, said to Lot that there was a strange man down at the old Kirk house, and that Missus went down there to see him.

"Yer shet up yer mouf, nigger; yer don' know what yer's er talkin' erbout."

"Yes, I duz, Uncle Lot, an' I seed her kiss 'im, too," said Sam.

Whack! went Lot's hand against the boy's mouth, which sent him rolling over on the ground, howling like mad.

"I'll teach yer how ter go er nosin' whur yer got no bizniss. Yer let me hear ernother word outen ye, nigger, an' I'll half kill yer—yer hear?"

"Yaas, sir," and he went off limping.

"Come back yere. What fur yer limpin'? Makin' out like I hu't yer w'en I jes' hit yer on de haid. Nex' time I'll hit yer on de heel shore 'nuff,

an' gin yer somethin' ter holler erbout. Clare out, yer nigger yer!"

Lot, the faithful old ducky that he was, was sorely tried. Cæsar had reported to him the occurrence of the drive from the post-office, and about the note having been thrown into the carriage and its sudden disappearance, and the daily visits to the old Kirk house, and the hours spent there.

"Dere cain't be nuthin' wrong, Cæsar; but yer know Marse Jack put everyt'ing inter my care ter look arfter, an' I's 'sponsible. Dere jes' cain't be nuthin' wrong, an' don' yer say nuthin' erbout it ter nobody."

Day after day the lonely rides were taken. Cæsar was dispatched every day for the mail. He reported to Lot that everybody was asking after his Missus, and wanting to know why she did not come for the mail as usual.

"I jes' tell 'em dat she's mighty busy right now. I knowed ef I tole 'em dat she wuz sick, dat dey all would come eround ter see 'er; an' I knowed dat she didn't want 'em ter; so I jes' tole 'em she was busy. But, 'fore de Lawd, I'd like ter know who dat man is, an' what he's er doin' eround yere."

"Yer better not be axin queschuns, Cæsar; it's white folks' bizniss, an' niggers better keep der mouf shet. Dere cain't be nuthin' wrong," said Lot.

The next day after this conversation Mrs. De Mar had Cæsar drive her over to Sherwood in the family carriage, where she was taken directly to the bank. After a half hour spent there, she came

out and was driven home. The following morning the chambermaid came down and said that her Missus was not in her room, and that she had been unable to find her, after searching the premises. Lot was sent for and informed of the fact.

"Look yere, niggers," said Lot, "yer better go slow, 'stead uv makin' all dis rumpus. Missus gone out summers. Go erbout yer wuck, de lass one uv yer."

Nevertheless, the search was quietly kept up, until Cæsar put in an appearance with the information that old Charlie and the little phaeton were missing. Lot began to rave at every one to go to work, or there would be trouble on that plantation. Then he took Cæsar and set out on a hunt for his Missus. Mounted on horses they went first to the old Kirk house. Everything was bare, except that there were evidences of recent occupation. Returning, they took up the tracks of the phaeton and followed them. When they turned off toward the boat-landing, it dawned on Lot's mind that it was boat day. Paying now little attention to the tracks, they hurried on to the river. When they arrived at the landing, they found old Charlie and the phaeton there. The man at the boat-house told them that a lady and gentleman had taken the boat that morning, leaving the horse and phaeton with the instruction that if not called for during the day they were to be sent to Sandowns. In answer to Lot's inquiry, he said that the lady had on a heavy veil, so that he could not tell who she was. He did not know the gentleman—he was a stranger. Lot and Cæsar

stared at each other for some moments before either could speak.

"Cæsar, nigger, what's Marse Jack gwine ter say ter dis?"

Cæsar's jaw worked in a most curious way, but never a word did he utter. Lot took him by the collar of his jacket and shook him.

"Nigger Cæsar, what's Marse Jack gwine ter say erbout dis?"

"What's Marse Jack gwine ter say? I doan' know what he gwine ter say; but I sez dis, ef Marse Jack don' cuss dis time, thur ain't no cuss words in 'im."

"Go long, yer 'gen'rate nigger, dis ain't no time fur cussin', it's de time ter pray," and the old darky made a bee-line for a nearby magnolia grove, and falling on his knees made the welkin ring with his earnest, tremulous petitions to a higher power than earth could afford. He prayed loud, long, and fervently, the main burden of which was for grace and wisdom to sustain and direct him in this his hour of greatest need. Suddenly his prayer ceased, and he rushed out at Cæsar, saying,

"Look yere, nigger, yer better stop all dis fuss. 'Sposen Missus jes' gone summers on bizniss, an' she come back an' hears erbout all dis carryin' on erbout 'er, what's she gwine ter say? Answer me dat," and he stood staring at Cæsar. "Come right er long home dis minit. Missus don't un'erstan' us niggers nohow anyway—an' maybe we doesn't un'erstan' her 'zactly, fur she's er New Yawk lady."

The boat-house man, taking advantage of this first lull in the conversation, asked,

"Was that your Missus that took the boat with the stranger?"

"No, sah," quickly answered Lot, "dat wuzn't our Missus; we wuz jes' foolin'. Come on, Cæsar, let's go home."

They had not gone far, before Lot, who was driving the phaeton, drew old Charlie to a stop, and said,

"Cæsar, what—*is*—Marse Jack gwine ter think of ole Lot erbout this turr'ble 'fiction?"

Cæsar sat dejectedly on his horse, with his hands hanging down in a helpless kind of way by his sides, shaking his wooly head, as if he were trying to shake it off his shoulders; but words failed him. They went on for some distance. When Cæsar found his tongue, he said,

"Say, Uncle Lot, I'll be jimwhiffed totally, ef Marse Jack don' cuss dis time—shore!"

"Yer better be t'inkin' erbout somethin' else dan cussin'—cussin' never done any good yit. Yer never heard Ole Massa cuss; yer never heard Marse Jack cuss; ner did yer ever hear poor Marse Hal cuss—gintlemen don't cuss—I means rale gintlemen."

Cæsar took this last remark as in some way reflecting on his gentility, and he snapped out,

"Ner yer never heard er goose cuss, nuther."

It is difficult to say where this might have ended had not their common distress intervened.

Having arrived at home, Lot retired to the barn, from whence came the sonorous voice of the old darky, in the anguish of his soul, pleading in heart-broken accents. He had liked his Missus for his

master's sake, and he had become greatly attached to her for her own kind, gentle ways. Now she was gone—he knew not where, nor with whom; and as he expressed it, “In such uv er way.” He was confident that she had not gone on any business errand, though he would not have made that admission to any one else. After his long prayer came wisdom sure enough. He hurried to his house, where his wife, Aunt Winny, had prepared his breakfast.

“Come erlong, honey, an’ git yer bre’kfus; I knows yer mus’ be hungry.”

“No, Winny, woman, I couldn’t eat sweet cake dis mawnin’ wid all dis ’sponsibility er restin’ on me. Winny, what’s Marse Jack gwine ter say ter me? De very las’ t’ing he said ter me wuz, ‘Lot, you tek good care uv yer Missus. I have tole her dat she would be perfectly safe here wid you all.’ An’ here’s Missus gone, an’ here’s me wid my finners in my mouf like any common nigger. Ain’t dat takin’ care uv Missus? Dere’ll be de letters comin’ from Marse Jack, tellin’ her erbout de war, an’ how he wants ter see her ag’in; an’ er sending messages ter Lot erbout t’ings, an’ no one yere ter read ’em. An’ he’ll be ’spectin’ er answer—an’ dere’ll be no answer. An’ he’ll be er wonderin’ what’s de matter wid Missus, an’ what’s de matter wid Ole Lot—an’ dere’ll be no answer ter dat nuther. He’ll be t’inkin’ that everyt’ing is all right an’ safe yere wid me at home, while he’s er sufferin’ an’ bleedin’ out dere in Furginny. (I never did hab any use fur Furginny sence dat Taylor man come yere.) He’ll be t’inkin’ everyt’ing’s all right; an’ yere I is, an’ doesn’t know w’ich way ter tu’n—my heart is breakin’.”

CHAPTER XXXVI

Neither history nor tradition runs back to the time when superstition first saw the light of day, nor to a time nor place in which the most enlightened people were entirely exempt from its spell. This is probably a broad statement to make in these enlightened days of the twentieth century; but I have a special reason for making it, and will ask you to accept it, because I would safeguard old Uncle Lot's reputation for levelheaded common sense. I would not have you misjudge him in this hour, the darkest he had ever known, or that could possibly come to him, if he finds himself constrained to cut loose from his old moorings—safe under the sheltering rocks of reason—and dive into the occult mysteries of superstition. Never in his life before had he been tempted to look with the least degree of allowance on anything like witchery or hoodooism. Lot's was only another case pointing the assertion: "There is no use in saying that you will not do this, nor that you will not do that. You can't know what you will do, until you are tried." Twenty-four hours ago, Lot would have scoffed at the bare idea of consulting a conjure doctor. Poor, frail mortality! And Lot was mortal. So we will not have the less respect for him—a true, coolheaded old darky—for having appealed to such a source—every other aid having failed him.

His Missus, whom he had learned to love so dearly, had disappeared, under the most impossible circumstances. As has been stated, his young mas-

ter had gone to the war and left everything in his care; and everything included, first and foremost, his young Missus; and he fully appreciated the great responsibility. He would have allowed himself to be drawn limb from limb to prevent any harm coming to her. What should he do now? He wept and he prayed. His poor old heart would surely break. How could he ever face his young master again? More than once the thought of self-destruction entered his head; but Lot was a sensible old darky. To destroy himself would settle nothing—except himself; and there was not a single selfish fiber in his makeup. It would have been cowardly; and Lot was no coward.

Three hours after sunset—the time was part of the formula—Lot set out to find the conjure doctor. How he knew when and where to find him is more than I can say positively now. Anyway, in less than an hour after he had started, Lot had hitched his little mule to a dogwood tree, for so the formula began, which had three limbs pointing due east. He was then to go three rods in that direction, which would bring him into a path he was to follow, and which he must needs follow, from the fact that the undergrowth was so dense on either side that he could not pass through it if he had wished to do so. There was no moon; only the stars gave their uncertain light out in the open, and utterly failed as he penetrated the denser growing swamp. On and on he went, groping his way, until he came to a point where he was stopped by running into a bank of grapevines and briars. Just after he had met this obstruction, and was bewildered by the pitchy

darkness, there was the call of a screech-owl just to his left, which was answered by the hooting of a great horned owl some distance farther on. Busy-ing himself with getting out of the briers, he scarcely noticed these signals. Where it came from Lot never knew, but a hand touched his shoulder and deftly slipped down his arm to his wrist, and in less time than it takes to tell it, a noose tightened around his hand.

"Who's dat?" demanded Lot; but not a word was vouchsafed in reply—simply a tightening of the cord, drawing him sharply back on an acute angle to the direction he had been going. He followed the leading, moving much more rapidly now than he had been able to do unaided. Lot strained his eyes to see the form of his leader. The rhythm of the step, when he could discern any, was that of a woman or child. From the occasional rustling of what might be supposed to be a skirt, he was inclined to believe that it was a woman. First to the right and then to the left the narrow path turned. Twice it made such short turns back as to appear to him as though they were retracing their steps. They had not gone much farther, when the cord slackened, and then ceased to guide him altogether. Having learned to depend upon the guiding cord, it was rather bewildering to be cast adrift all at once without any warning.

"What now?" asked Lot, after a moment's waiting, supposing that his guide was still near at hand—he had heard no retracing steps; but he had no answer. Evidently he was left alone, he knew not where. He stretched out his arms at full length,

feeling for the undergrowth to guide him again; but as far as they could reach they touched nothing. Stretching out hands and feet in every direction, he found that he was in an open space of some size. Not knowing in what direction to go, he stood still, inferring that, as he had been led to that place, he had reached his destination.

His ears, now quick with expectation, caught those indescribable sounds that come out of the night, ringing, buzzing, whispering, crickety sounds—sounds that cannot be located. Louder and louder they grew, and from confusing they became almost maddening; hissings, as if a thousand serpents were around him; the croakings of every conceivable kind of frog that he had ever heard; the sharp, snapping sound, made by night birds, when disturbed near their nests; and as a climax to it all, came two voices in a solemn chant, which grew nearer and grew louder, then dying away until it was almost inaudible. If these sounds were indescribable, their effect upon the hearer was peculiarly wonderful. Lot felt as if he were in a strange world, living a new existence. The chant went on, now sinking until he could not be sure whether it had ceased or not, then growing louder and louder, swelling into tones that filled the surrounding swamp. At times the chant would suddenly cease, and its echo would come back—sweet, soft, and low. At other times there was a commingling of mellow reed notes, followed by the tinkling of little bells in different tones.

When the chant died out—there was no point at which it could have been said finally to stop—some

other voices in the distance took up a melody, singing it as only negroes can sing them. At times it scarcely reached the ear, though it continued through the seance. In broad, open daylight Lot would have laughed at this play for effect; but at this hour, in this place, with these surroundings, and under the present circumstances, lost as it were in this swamp, his nerves already overwrought by anxiety and distress, it was not to be wondered at that the emotional character of the negro in Lot should have been deeply stirred and his imagination wrought upon to its full capacity.

The mere noises had grown lower and lower and less distinct, until they had died away entirely. During this, Lot had been in outer darkness. Now that all had grown quiet, save the quartet in the distance, he noticed a pale indistinct light—an uncanny light, as if made by glow worms. This grew into a delicate blue, which, while it enabled him to see something of the objects surrounding him, cast a most ghastly glamour over everything. He saw a circle of huge cypress trees, forming an amphitheater, their boughs meeting overhead. Great swaths of Spanish moss hung down from the limbs, waving gently back and forth in the light breeze.

The ringing of a small bell directed his attention to an arched opening on one side, at which he saw a large, tall man standing motionless. His face was of a soot-black, but his long beard and shocky hair were snow white, as were his shaggy eyebrows. His eyes were large, bright, and black. He was clad in the skins of the animals of the swamp—representing the coon, the otter, the deer, the fox, and the squir-

rel. The plumage of some of the showier birds were dabbed about here and there over this grotesque covering.

Large shell rings were pendent from his ears. Moving slowly to one side, he disclosed a scantily dressed female standing near him. A light filmy skirt fell from her waist to just below her knees; a tawdry something served as a bodice. Her figure was light and graceful, and her hands and feet were small, even for a person of her size, for she did not rise to near the man's shoulders. Her skin was pearly white; her head was covered with a shock of fine, white hair; her brows and lashes were of the same color; her eyes were of a pale pink, and even this dim light caused her to keep them half-closed. Lot had never seen or heard of an albino, and consequently he was ready, under the circumstances, to suppose that she was something supernatural.

He felt what he thought to be two hands on his shoulders pressing him down on his knees. He looked around expecting to see a third person, but he could see no one. The conjuror made a sign to the woman, and she instantly disappeared to return almost as quickly bearing in her hands a large and curious shell, from the inside of which proceeded the light he had seen. She advanced within a yard of him, and placed the shell on the ground near where he was kneeling. Coming nearer to him, she began waving her hands slowly from side to side over his head, her body partaking of the side-swinging motion. Nearer and nearer she came until her hands frequently touched his face, the while repeating some formulary gibberish. Lot felt his eyelids

growing heavy, there was a roaring in his ears and a numb feeling stealing over his body. He tried to speak, but his tongue seemed swollen and stiff. The woman gazed into his eyes a moment, and what she saw there was probably satisfactory as she ceased her incantations and knelt beside the shell. From some place in her bodice she took what looked to Lot to be a piece of putty, about the size of a pigeon's egg, and dropped it into the shell, where it began to roll around as if of its own power. Then she took a wild goose's feather from her tangled white hair, and with the web end of it stirred the contents of the shell, which began to boil and bubble and burn as if with an intense heat, changing from one color to another in rapid succession. Ever and anon she shaded her pink eyes and peered into the shell through her fingers. When she would do so, she would remove the feather from the burning mass, and to Lot's amazement it showed no signs of having been injured by the heat. Again the feather would be thrust back and the mass stirred vigorously. Finally, when it had settled down to a dead white, and remained so under the most vigorous stirring, the woman drew a long breath of relief, and, without changing her position, held up the forefinger of her right hand, which proved to be a signal for the conjure doctor to advance. He moved forward with a slow, measured tread, and knelt beside the woman and the shell, muttering some unintelligible words. He waved his hands over his head several times; then bringing them down over the shell with his palms down, leaving an opening between his thumbs, he peered into the white, burning mass.

CHAPTER XXXVII

"I sees er white dove," began the conjuror, "er floatin' erway—floatin' down stream seems ter me. De white dove is turr'ble scared. Dere's somethin' what she's er hidin' under 'er wing." He paused and looked fixedly into the shell with its burning mass, and then continued, "I sees—hit is er serpint—er white serpint. Hit hab twined hitse'f eround 'er, an' hit's de serpint dat is er takin' 'er away summers. Dere's gre't trouble an' trib'lations, an' der trouble is gwine ter mek yer trimble." With that he blew into the shell and the fire, or the light, or whatever it was, went out, leaving them in the dark. In the darkness and silence, the voices in the distance came floating back; whether they had stopped at all, was more than Lot could have told. The woman began stirring the mass again, and it glowed and burned as before. The conjure doctor had returned to the entrance under the arch. As the woman stirred, the color changed time and again, taking on all the colors of the rainbow. Now and then she stopped and peered into the shell, and examined the mass closely, and then stirred and stirred until it settled down to a dark brown color. Then up went the woman's finger as before, and the conjuror advanced and knelt down by the shell.

"I sees er dark man boun' eroun' wid shackles, an' while de shackles am er growin' weaker ebbery day, yit dey bin's 'im fass ter he trouble, an' dey will bin' 'im, drawin' uv him on an' on; he cain't siparate hese'f from he troubles. Ef dem shackles

wuz broke now—" and again he stopped and gazed into the shell, "Ef dem shackles wuz broke now, hit would be all de same, fur dere's odder cords er bindin' uv 'im ter de white dove what he cain't break, ef he wanted ter—which he don'."

The light began to wane, and the woman thrust her feather into the mass, and by some unaccountable carelessness stirred it the wrong way; and there was a terrible flash like lightning, though there was no report whatever. The feather was consumed, and the woman fell over backward, apparently dead. In the pale blue light that remained, Lot and the conjuror stared at her an instant. Then the conjuror sprang to his feet and leaned over her prostrate form, calling her,

"Teelee, Teelee, Teelee! Wake up, wake up, Teelee!"

Had it not been for the fright Lot saw on the old man's face, he would have thought that this was part and parcel of the performance. As it was, the old man's trembling and excited movements, and the horrible workings of the muscles of his face, convinced Lot that an accident had happened. He tried to aid the conjuror; but to his horror he found that he could not move. The conjuror seemed to be conscious of his efforts, for he said,

"Be still, Lot, be still, you cain't move. Ef she dies I's ruined forebber, an' you'll nebber be able ter move ergin. Dere ain't nobody but Teelee can tech dat zono and live." Turning again to the prostrate form, "Teelee, Teelee, my own Teelee!" he cried most piteously, wringing his hands while the tears streamed down his face. He chafed her hands and

face, and cried; but it seemed in vain. Except for some feeble twitchings of the muscles of her limbs, she appeared to be dead. Again and again Lot struggled to move or speak; he could do neither. One can imagine with what interest he watched the conjuror's efforts to restore the woman. His own fate was a matter of secondary consideration. The misery came with the thought that his Missus was gone and that he ought to follow and find her. This thought banished every consideration for the fate of himself, of Teelee, or the conjuror from his mind. The overruling thought and desire was to be freed himself. From the remark of the conjuror, he was given to understand that Teelee alone could release him; and Teelee was dying. Great drops of perspiration gathered on his face. To him, it seemed that ages were passing. The conjuror continued to chafe the woman's hands and feet, which he now felt were getting cold. He touched the tip of her nose and her ears; they too were growing cold and colder. The convulsive motions of her muscles were becoming more feeble; evidently she was fast passing away. The conjuror sprang to his feet and rushed around the open space like one demented, pulling his hair and raving, and crying in turn. Coming back, he stood over the dying woman and gazed into her contorted face. His hands were clenched; the tears had ceased to flow; while utter despair was written in every feature. Raising his eyes to Lot, he cried,

"Lot, one er both uv us is doomed! Ef I could put de leastest bit uv zono ter her lips, she might

live; but ef I tech it, I'm er dead nigger! What shall I do?"

It was fruitless to ask Lot, for he could not speak; he could only suffer and wait. If he could have spoken, would Lot have had the conjuror sacrifice himself to release him? Lot was not selfish; but then his Missus was gone and he must follow. No selfish impulse would have prompted him if he had been able to speak and tell the conjuror what he wished him to do.

The conjuror must surely have had some occult power, for while he stood there gazing into Lot's eyes, he must have read his thoughts, and have understood and appreciated their noble promptings, for he at once made up his mind and said,

"Lot, I'll do hit—I'll do hit fur yer sake; an' dat's fur yer Missus's sake; I'll do hit an' die! I's gittin' ole anyways. An', Lot, ef ever Teelee cums ter yer in trouble, I knows yer will help 'er, an' won't let 'er be imposed erpun. An', Lot, ef yer finds yer Missus, tell her dat an ole nigger give his life fer 'er, 'cause he had heard dat she wuz good an' kind. Good-by, Lot!" and he stooped down and kissed Teelee's cold lips.

The troubled and distressed look now shifted from the face of the conjuror to that of Lot, whose tears were now coursing down his cheeks, prompted of what emotion I will leave each one to imagine.

The conjuror hastened out through the arched way and soon returned with a dagger in his hand. It glistened in even that dim, uncertain light with a cruel kindness. He seemed to hesitate—looking first at Teelee and then at Lot. Was his determin-

ation wavering? It was a tragic moment—the suspense was awful. The more so, by reason of the peculiar circumstances, the hour, and the weird surroundings. Life and death, honor and shame comingling, stirring in the hearts of these black men, prompting to—duty. A bright halo formed around the conjuror's head, as if something divine had settled about it. His hands and eyes were raised aloft, and but for the moving of his lips, not a muscle stirred as he stood there—a martyr! A martyr, ready to be offered up on the altar of duty.

It was finished! He drew the woman's head around until her lips touched the rim of the shell. For an instant he hesitated; but only for an instant, and then with a quick but steady motion, he jabbed the mass in the shell with the point of the dagger, and as quickly drew it across the woman's lips. The next instant he lay stretched on the ground in violent convulsions, which gradually subsided into the stillness of death. It is doubtful if Lot breathed either while this was transpiring, so overwhelming was the suspense. Some motion made by Teelee attracted Lot's attention from the conjuror to her. To his amazement and joy, he saw her hand slowly moving toward her lips, from which was rising a dim, vapory smoke. When her hand reached her lips, she gently patted them with the tips of her fingers.

Hope, that had lain dead in Lot's heart for the last few moments, now began to move its delicate tentacles, and grow with every new sign of life in Teelee. After what seemed to Lot an interminable

time, but which in reality was but a few minutes. Teelee began to stretch her limbs and yawn, as if just awakening from a sound sleep. Soon she sat up and gazed around in a bewildered kind of way, until her attention was attracted to the conjuror. In an instant she sprang to her feet and ran to his side. When she saw his condition and the dagger by his side, the idea possessed her that he had been foully dealt with—that he had been stabbed.

“Who done this?” she cried, glaring at Lot. “Not yer, Lot. I know, for yer couldn’t ter done it; but I’ll let yer tell me.”

Quickly she passed over to him, and began making passes with her hands over his head and around his face; now and then touching his lips; then she took him by the hands and said to him, “Arise, Lot,” and he was loosened and sprang to his feet. He was free! He was free! He was free to go after his Missus. While this was his first thought, it did not make him forget his friend who was willing to sacrifice himself for his Missus. In as few words as possible he explained to Teelee what had happened. As soon as she realized the situation, she took the zono out of the shell, and rolled the putty-looking mass around in her hands until it began to emit a pale blue smoke. Then she knelt down and blew some of the smoke into the conjuror’s nostrils, from the effect of which he began to twitch and went off into another convulsion, but of a different character from the other. Then he yawned and stretched himself, and soon recovered consciousness. He lived.

When the conjuror had regained his composure,

Teelee began fondling the zono—crooning to it, as she would have done to a tired, sleepy child. She folded it to her bosom, just as she would have done a thing of life. Then she passed out through the opening archway. Lot drew out some money with which to pay the fee; but when the conjuror noticed him, he said,

“Put up your money, Lot. We’s bin too close ter de odder side ter-night ter think erbout money—put it up, put it up, an’ go ter yer troubles, dey’re ’nuff fur yer, shore.”

Whist! The light went out, and Lot was left alone in the dark—a darkness that could almost be felt, so dense was it. For some moments he was left to his thoughts. A whippoorwill began to call; at first at a considerable distance, then nearer and nearer it came, until it was by his side. Suddenly he felt the cord tighten around his wrist, and he knew he was to follow. By a much shorter route than the one by which he came, he was led to the point where he had entered the swamp.

Lot mounted his little mule and rode home, pondering upon what he had heard and seen that night. What the conjure doctor had told him about his Missus going off with a wicked man impressed his mind more profoundly than the spectacular part of the performance. He would not permit his most innermost thought to be disloyal to his Missus—it would be all right. He was the slave bound by birth and law; and bound by stronger ties than these—ties of affection and life-long devotion to these white people. It was only necessary that he should see his duty to them, and it would be done

to the letter, regardless of consequences. There is no doubt but that the conjure doctor's hints were in accord with what he had felt was his duty. If, however, there were doubts before, there were none now.

“’Tain’t no use in bein’ pigheaded erbout it, cause yer don’t zac’ly understand things. Yer ain’t gwine ter say wattermillion ain’t sweet, ’cause yer don’t know how de sugar got inter it. ’Tain’t no use ter say chicken ain’t good, cause yer don’t know what meks it good; is dey? Dat conjure doctor is a nigger, but he’s got some ways uv findin’ things out shore! I shore promised Marse Jack dat I’d tek care uv Missus until he got back, an’ here I’ve let her—” He could not finish the sentence; but began to sob—his honest, black face working into the most painful contortions in his great agony and distress.

“Poor Marse Jack; Poor Missus!” he cried, never once thinking, “Poor Lot!”—honest, loyal and true to his trust—what more!

CHAPTER XXXVIII

On the morning following Lot's visit to the conjure doctor, he mounted a fleet horse and set out for Sherwood. Going to the bank he inquired for Mr. McLaughlin, saying that he wanted to see him privately. On being ushered into the president's private room, with the door closed, he said,

"Mr. McLaughlin, my Missus wuz in yere day befo' yistiddy."

"Yes, Lot, she was in here then to see me," and there he stopped, much to Lot's disappointment. The old darky had been well trained—nay, it was not so much a matter of training, either, as it was a sense of refinement imbibed from association with his masters that caused him to hesitate to appear to pry into "white folks' affairs"; but, as the wily old Scotchman was equally coy, and there was no time to lose, there was nothing else to do than to go straight to the point.

"Did Missus speak uv goin' erway anywheres, boss?"

"No, Lot; why do you ask?" said the banker, in turn growing interested. He had for years been the most intimate friend of the family at Sandowns.

"Well, sah, she hab dis—" He was about to say disappeared, but it struck him that it was not exactly the word to use, so he said, "She hab gone down de river—took de boat yistiddy mawnin'."

"Is there anything strange in that, Lot? Doubtless she has gone down to the city to make some

purchases. Her visit here the day before would look as if something of that kind was the case."

"'Pears as ef she'd er said somethin' ter some uv us, sah. It's so unlike 'er ter go off an' not say nuthin' ter any one erbout it."

"That may all be true, my man; but it is rather a delicate matter. I know that your master has entrusted you with the care of everything on the place; he has the utmost confidence in you; and I am aware that you are fully alive to the responsibility that rests upon you; but it would be very awkward if you raised an alarm, and your Missus should arrive home on the next boat."

"Yes, sah; I knows dat. I ain't gwine ter raise no 'larm; but she ain't gwine ter do dat." Should he make a clean breast of it, and tell all that he knew to Mr. McLaughlin? He could not bring himself all at once up to that point. It was all too terrible to discuss with any one outside of the family.

"Mr. McLaughlin, I mus' follow my Missus. Lot could never face Marse Jack ergin ef anythin' should happen ter Missus, an' I hadn' seen atter her; an' dat's de reason dat I have come ter yer. Marse Jack tole me dat I wuz ter come ter you er Jedge Strong, ef I needed anyt'ing outen de way. I t'ought I'd better come ter yer 'cause I'll need some money, an' passes an' everyt'ing ter show who I is—so's I won't be tuck up. I cain't afford ter be tuck up."

"Lot, that is putting a rather serious face on the case. You to go away, no one knows where, nor for what length of time, leaving everything open

on the place, with the money that you would need, and an unlimited pass in your pocket."

Lot wrinkled up his face and thought very hard for a moment.

"Well, Mr. McLaughlin, it am a very ser'ous case. I knows dat Marse Jack wanted me ter look arfter Missus 'fore everyt'ing else. Won't yer please go eround ter Jedge Strong's wid me. I mus'n't lose no time. If yer lets er road wagon git er few miles erhead uv yer, it teks er long time ter ketch up wid it. Ef I teks de boat in de mawnin' I'll be three days behin'; an' ef I waits until de nex' day, I'll be fo' days behin'."

"Certainly, Lot, I will go with you around to see Judge Strong," and taking his hat he went, followed by Lot. Arriving at the Judge's office, Mr. McLaughlin went in, leaving Lot without. In a few seconds, however, a servant conducted Lot into the Judge's private office.

"Good-morning, Uncle Lot," was the Judge's salutation.

"Yer most humble sarvant, Jedge," with one of his most profound bows, out-stretching his arms to their full length. The old darky had been doing some wonderfully rapid thinking while following the banker on the street. He saw that he must make a full statement of the case. These were his master's best friends—the very men he would have gone to himself, for advice. As humiliating as it was, feeling all the disgrace of it, in as few words as possible he told the whole story; but wound up with the positive assertion—one that would brook no questioning—he must follow his Missus, and

with all despatch possible. He must have the necessary funds and passes to enable him to do the work before him. Having heard him through, he was told to sit outside for a few moments. He had not long to wait, though it seemed interminable to him in his impatience. Mr. McLaughlin and Judge Strong had been impressed with Lot's arguments and plans, knowing the full confidence the Doctor had in Lot's good sense and judgment, as well as in his discretion. They decided to leave it in the old darky's hands.

A sum of money, in gold and silver, with some Confederate money, was put into a belt for him, which he was to wear under his clothing. A pass as unlimited as it were possible to make was given him, signed by Judge Strong and Mr. McLaughlin—men known far and wide, with the precaution taken to have the Clerk of the Court sign it, and attach the seal of the Court to it. Thus armed, Lot hurried home to make his final preparations for his journey.

Cæsar and Jim were taken into the council. He explained that he was forced to go away for a while. Big Jim was to take charge of the field-hands, and Cæsar to have charge of the stock and the rations. Every one was to be impressed with the fact that Lot might turn up at any moment, and that any insubordination during his absence would be severely punished.

With these matters off his hands, he went to his own house and had his wife to put him up a kit, in which he directed her to place a suit of her own clothing. When it came to this, old Aunt Winny's

eye dilated with amazement. Was she to go too? What would become of the children?

"No, woman, no; you ain't ergoin'. Do as I tells yer ter do, an' keep everyt'ing straight w'ile I's gone. I'll find Missus or—" He did not conclude the sentence.

Long before boat time the next morning, Lot had told Winny good-by, and was at the landing awaiting the boat. When it arrived, he did not wait for the gangplank to be thrown out, but sprang into the boat and hurried to the purser and asked for a ticket to the city.

"Hello, Uncle Lot," said the purser, who knew Lot well, and under ordinary circumstances would not have thought of asking him for a pass; but seeing his haste and excitement, inquired, "Have you a pass, old man?"

"Yaas, sah; yere it is," producing that document.

"Why, Uncle Lot, this is a formidable-looking pass. You are to go where you please, and stay as long as you want to. It is all right—these signatures are all right; and here is the signature of the Clerk of the Court with the county seal—that's all right, Lot. Have your people turned the old man out to starve? This is as near setting you free as it is possible to do in this State."

"No, boss, my people ain't turned me out ter starve, ner dey never will do dat."

"I believe you, Uncle Lot; Sandowns would not be Sandowns without you. The fare is six dollars and a half."

Lot fished out the exact change in Confederate money from an old purse and handed it to him.

As soon as the boat was underway he began his detective work. He sauntered around among the deck hands, and learned that a lady and gentleman had boarded the boat on the last trip. None of the hands knew who they were. The gentleman was a stranger, and the lady was so heavily veiled that they did not know her either. In his over caution he failed to ask quite enough questions to save time and expense; for the boat had passed Hanging Bluff some miles before he learned that the lady and gentleman had left the boat at that point. He immediately went to the Captain and informed him that he wanted to land at Hanging Bluff, where these people had gone ashore—he had supposed they were going to the city.

“They did buy tickets for the city; but while we were at Hanging Bluff they suddenly decided to land there. They gave no reason for so doing. Some one had just said something about the guard that would come on the boat at Magnolia Point; and I wondered if that had anything to do with their sudden change of plans. It looked suspicious at the time. Do you know them, Lot?”

“I never seed ’em, Cap’n—so I cain’t tell.” Nor was anything further to be had of Lot on the subject. “I never meddles wid white folks’ affairs,” and that settled it.

There was no other course left him except to keep to the boat until its return that night to Hanging Bluff—another delay for the old ducky. Back he came that night, to find on disembarking that the party had landed there, and that the man had purchased a pair of mules and a carryall, and had gone

no one knew where. To follow on foot was not to be thought of, to hire a horse or mule was equally impracticable, for he had no idea for what length of time he would want it, even if he found any one who would hire him a horse. He followed their example and tried to purchase a mule. In answer to his inquiries he was informed that the other party had bought the only spare stock in the neighborhood—Wheeler's men having raided the place recently. Lot was not to be balked. He shouldered his kit and set out on foot, following the road that the other party had taken. His progress was of necessity slow, for he lost much time in stopping to make inquiry for a horse or mule. He preferred a mule from the fact that horses were scarce, and a mule would not be so apt to be impressed for the army service. At the first night's stop he was fortunate to find a fairly good mule for sale, for which he gave five hundred dollars in Confederate money. After a hard day's ride the next day, he found that he had not gained on the fugitives—they were at least fifty miles ahead of him. On the next day his mule went lame, and he had to lose time to have him shod.

The fugitives were so far in advance of him now that it made it difficult to keep track of them. Sometimes for half a day he could hear nothing of them. They so often left the main road for miles and then would come into it again; but Lot never became discouraged. He knew nothing of geography, and it was only by the guiding of the stars that he had any idea of the direction he was going. Every night he would consult them. They were his old friends,

and had served him often; not only telling him the direction, but the time as well. Who shall know—for doubtless he knew not himself—what inspirations of hope he found in their contemplation during these nights of wandering on his troubled journey. There is no question but that Lot saw back of them a Supreme Being—a God he trusted and devoutly worshiped. His ears may not have been attuned to catch their song, yet their wondrousness and beauty touched the divine spark within his good heart, and he praised and trusted their Creator. That unchanging star that hangs over the land of the midnight sun told him that he was traveling north. He knew that the great armies were north of him, and that thought was a great comfort to him—his master was there; and possibly he might be able to find him, and let him know.

On and on he trudged day by day, making what haste he could; and as is all too often the case, one's haste defeats the hurry; he had over-taxed his mule, and it gave out and had to be abandoned. This was just at a time when he could hear nothing of the fugitives. He gave the mule up and started afoot; but it was slow progress—slow, weary work, carrying his kit, saddle, and bridle. Having lost the trail entirely, it was possible that he was on the wrong road. Under the circumstances he thought it best to take time to replace his mule. Being in the neighborhood of a county town, and having been told that the next day would be a sales day, he thought he might be able to find some one there with a mule for sale, and he determined to wait and rest.

On the next day—it was a Monday—Lot wended

his way to the town. Quite a concourse of people had assembled there on the public square; and there was apparently something unusual going on, as men were moving about in an excited way—it amounted almost to a riot, and the crowd seemed pretty evenly divided. Drawing near the outskirts of the throng, Lot learned that some people had been arrested, and that it was on account of these people that there was so much excitement, the crowd being divided as to what should be done with them. The majority seemed in favor of putting them in jail. The word “*spics*” was in every one’s mouth. More than one suggested hanging them on the spot. Just then a terrible yell up the street attracted Lot’s attention. Looking in that direction he saw a powerfully built man, well mounted, coming down toward the crowd. He was tall, large and well-proportioned; his nose rather prominent and Roman; his side-whiskers were brushed to the front; his eyes large and brown; his complexion florid; he wore a broad-brimmed hat turned up in front, also a blue dress coat with brass buttons; his trousers’ legs were stuck down in his top boots. As he dashed up, the crowd began to give way—some one crying,

“Look out, here comes McGympsey!”

“Clear the way,” sang out the rider in a stentorian voice, “here comes your uncle!” Reining in his powerful horse, he shied his hat into the air, catching it as it descended, shouting, *Hic, haec, hoc, col-legiendum bona defuncti!* Stand back, you ignoramuses. What’s up here?”

He was told that some suspicious characters had

been arrested. They were evidently spies—strangers—who had nothing to show who they were, or where they came from.

“Stand back!” he said, as he pushed the front of his hat up. “Let your uncle see into this matter,” and he rode into the crowd regardless of whose toes his horse trod on. The crowd fell back and revealed a delicate young man—evidently an invalid—and a heavily veiled lady.

“Ah, a sick man,” and turning and bowing profoundly, “and a lady,” taking off his hat most respectfully. Turning to the crowd, he said,

“Stand back, I say, stand back. Don’t you know a lady when you see one?”

They fell back quickly enough at his bidding. Dismounting, with his hat in his hand, he gave the bridle reins to an onlooker and approached the lady.

“Let me beg your pardon, my dear Madam, and let me apologize for this herd—they know not what they do—This gentleman appears to be ill—I take him to be a gentleman, as I find him in company with a lady,” and he cleared his throat with a drunken gravity that under other circumstances would have been amusing, and said to the crowd,

“I will be responsible for these good people—this lady and gentleman, until to-morrow. I will take them to my house for the night. To-morrow——”

To-morrow—to-morrow—what of to-morrow? Colonel McGympsey never finished the sentence, if he intended to do so, which was doubtful. He bowed to the crowd, and turned to the captives. Some of the more unruly ones were disposed to question these proceedings. The entire town was in

a commotion, seething with excitement. Remember, these were war times—and war times are bad times. While the crowd did not relish being robbed of their game, they realized that Colonel McGympsey was not to be trifled with when in his cups—and the Colonel was in his cups then. The lady said to him,

“You have placed us under obligations, for which please accept our thanks; and will you kindly add to the obligation by allowing us to return to our camp for the night, passing our parole to be at your orders in the morning. We could not move on if we were disposed to do so, seeing that one of our animals is lame, which accident has detained us in this neighborhood for a couple of days already. And this seems the sum of our offending. We have molested no one—we have paid for any supplies that we have had. As for our being spies, that is preposterous.”

“Your most obedient servant, Madam. I agree with you fully; but while McGympsey has a shingle over his head, no lady must remain out of doors.”

After a hurried consultation in an undertone, it was decided that it might be best to humor the man, who at least was respectful, if nothing more. Turning to him—he had stepped back some paces, when he saw that they wished to confer with each other—the lady said,

“As you insist on our doing so, we will accept your kind invitation if you will permit us to return to our camp for a short time.

“Most assuredly, Madam. Permit me, and I will

accompany you and remove the entire outfit to my house."

"We could not think of imposing on your family to that extent." It had occurred to her that the man's family might not fall into his vein entirely—that they might find themselves *de trop*; and she said as much to him.

"You behold my family—*solus cum solo*—bag and baggage. I am literally and truly the lord of my premises; and you will be as welcome there as at your own home."

That speech left nothing more to be said. Bowing, he led the way, under their direction, to the camp. Having seen them safely there, which was not a great distance off, he mounted his horse and dashed off at a break-neck speed, leaving them to wonder if they should see him again—this newly found friend, who had so timely interfered in their behalf.

They were not left long in suspense. Before they were ready to break camp,—for they had been somewhat tardy, as they were in doubt as to whether he would return or not,—he came dashing back and stopped all preparations. They paused and wondered what new freak had possessed him. Drinking, he certainly was, and who could know what a drunken man might do? They looked at each other with a questioning look. If the Colonel observed this, he made no sign, he stood there stolidly looking at the outfit—however, with his head uncovered. While the time seemed long to them, it was not a great while before the explanation was apparent. Soon a light wagon came up full

of servants, who were ordered to pack up everything carefully and bring them to the house. The family carriage followed closely, in which he insisted that they should go; giving them the assurance that everything would be safe, and as well cared for as if they had superintended it themselves. They began, in a way, to realize what manner of a man this was into whose hands they had fallen—drunk though he was. Entering the carriage, they were driven to the Colonel's home, which proved to be at no great distance.

CHAPTER XXXIX

“In ye good old times”—which means in the South, “’fore the war”—it was no uncommon thing for the class of men who had been overseers on the large plantations to become in turn the owners of them, and not infrequently very wealthy men. Their success depended upon the fact that they were selected from the most practical young men, sons of successful small farmers in the neighborhood, who had taught their sons to work from their infancy up. The most industrious ones of these sons were chosen to take charge of large plantations. They were furnished everything necessary for their use, except their clothing. If their services were satisfactory they were paid handsome salaries, which the shrewdest and most economical ones left in the hands of their employers, and for which they were allowed interest, until it often grew to a sum that was not easily met.

Often, as the years went by, the owners grew old or lazy, and had other more desirable plantations; and, perhaps, becoming attached to the overseer, and glad to help him in the world, would settle the claim by selling him the plantation—“lock, stock, and barrel,” as it was often expressed, giving him ample time in which to pay for it. By hard work and economy he generally succeeded.

The idea that obtained—and I suppose yet obtains to a degree—that the wealthier class at the South looked down upon their poorer neighbors as inferior to themselves was not, and is not, true.

The worthy poor were always respected and helped in every way. Now the negro has always failed to respect poor white people—"poor white trash," as they called them. The negroes on large plantations would not have anything to do with those owned on small places by comparatively poor men; therefore, there was nothing that a negro dreaded more than to be owned by a poor man; it made no difference how kindly they were treated—it was belonging to "poor white trash." True, there were instances where families became suddenly rich who had never known anything but poverty, whose heads were turned, and who became foolishly arrogant; the same thing has been true—ever and everywhere.

Colonel McGympsey, the subject of this chapter, was the son of a small, but honest and respectable farmer. He had proven one of the fortunate class of overseers succeeding to the ownership of the plantation where he had worked so long and satisfactorily. Also, he had been fortunate in marrying a woman in whom were combined qualities of thrift and good hard common sense. A son and daughter had been born to them, and realizing keenly the want of a good education, they determined that their children should not experience the same regret.

There being no good schools near them, they employed a tutor. The father was very insistent that his son should be taught Latin and Greek; but the dominant idea with the mother was that her daughter should be taught botany. She had been present at some school exhibition in the country where

the star young lady had stood up before a large audience and had torn into pieces some simple little flower, giving curious, high-sounding names to each part of it. The audience had been rapturous over the performance, leaving with Mrs. McGympsey the impression that botany was the capstone of female education. She had then and there resolved that her daughter should finish up some day by doing something of the same kind.

When the tutor first came the Colonel had been very careful that his recommendation included his capacity to teach Latin and Greek. Every line of interrogation would wind up at that point. The Colonel having satisfied himself as to the tutor's qualifications, the mother took him in hand,

"Can you teach my daughter botany?" she asked.

"Yes, Mrs. McGympsey, I could teach botany." In the mean time, he was watching a little girl chasing a butterfly across the lawn.

There was some expression on his face or in the tone of his voice which was not assuring to the mother's anxious mind.

"Can you take a flower to pieces," she asked, "and tell all the names of the pieces as you pull them off?"

"Yes, Mrs. McGympsey, I can analyze a flower."

"That's the word—I heard Maud Moody say it, standing up before a whole crowd of people; so you must know something about it. And can you learn my daughter to do it, and say all them hard names?"

"I cannot think that there would be any trouble in teaching her, when she is far enough advanced to take up the study."

"But I want her to take it up right now, so she will learn it well."

"If you wish it, she might take up an elementary work at once."

"What sort of a work is that? Is that the same kind of botany that Maud Moody studied?"

"Doubtless, it was her first book in that study."

"All right then—just so it is botany—and she can do like Maud Moody."

This is not to be construed in contravention of the statement that Colonel McGympsey had been fortunate in securing a wife in whom were combined the qualities of thrift and good hard common sense. That statement stands pat. Everything is relative, everything is in accordance with one's lights: from her standpoint, she was being progressive and practical.

The tutor was employed and set to his task, the Colonel spending the hours given to Latin and Greek by his son's side; listening to him decline Latin nouns, or conjugating Greek verbs. In that way he caught quite a number of Latin words—the Greek was rather beyond him, with the curiously shaped letters and tongue-twisting words.

So successful had his planting been that he now employed an overseer to look after his work, which gave him more time to devote to Latin and Greek—to loaf around the post-office and to dabble in political campaigns. It was at this stage that he began to be called "Colonel," of which he was rather proud. Unfortunately, his unwonted leisure had led him to form a taste for corn whiskey, of which he frequently imbibed too much. On such occa-

sions he delighted in making a display of his newly acquired knowledge. His favorite exclamation, on riding into a crowd of his poorer neighbors, as we have heard him, was "*Hic, haec, hoc collegiendum, bona de functi.*" Then he would shy his hat up into the air, adding, "Why don't you learn something instead of being a lot of chuckleheads? *Magnus opobusque circumvolatus, sub tegmine fagi.*" Usually winding up with an invitation all round to take some corn whiskey. When he would get pretty far on in his cups, he would generally give the toast, "*Dum vivy vavy,*" which he would translate into, "While we live, let us live."

Though rough and uncouth to men when in his cups, he was a Chesterfield in the presence of ladies. He never passed a woman, rich or poor, in silk or homespun, that he did not remove his hat. He was never boisterous in their presence, nor did he permit others to be. He was much of a man, and he made many of the ruder young men of the neighborhood feel the weight of his fist for not heeding his warnings when they had been disrespectful in the presence of ladies. These qualities made him popular; and under certain circumstances feared.

As soon as his son was prepared for the freshman class he was sent to college. He had been gone but a few months when his sister poisoned herself by chewing the leaves of some deadly plant that she had found in one of her botanical explorations. The mother never rallied from the shock, and in a very short time followed her daughter; though she did not go by the way of botany. Very naturally the father centered his affections upon his only re-

maining child. He paid him frequent visits at college, on which occasions the son would read for him page after page of Latin. Before he had quite concluded his junior year, the war came on, and young McGympsey was with the first regiment that went to Virginia; of this step his father heartily approved, notwithstanding it necessitated his giving up his Latin and Greek.

"It will be for only a few weeks," the Colonel consoled himself. "It will be only a breakfast spell to wipe up them Yankees. I'd volunteer myself, but I am afraid that it would be over before I could get my affairs arranged."

Young McGympsey was made a lieutenant; but his father felt disappointed that he did not get a captaincy—with all his knowledge of Latin and Greek.

"Why, bless my soul!" he would say, "the boy can read pages of Latin without having to stop and spell a single word. I've heard him do it over and over again, never balking at a single word. Could one of them professors beat that? If the war would only last long enough, he would get to be a general; but it ain't going to do that."

The Colonel's breakfast spell lasted until considerably after luncheon. It lasted long enough for the young lieutenant to fight his way up to a captaincy at Malvern Hill—long enough for Chica-mauga to make him a colonel; and at Gettysburg, he won a general's star.

CHAPTER XL

Everything within the Colonel's power was done to make his prisoners comfortable. They had been made to feel very uncomfortable the day before, not simply from having been arrested, but by reason of the fact having come home to them that the nearer they approached the seat of war, the more difficult their progress was likely to be—not having the necessary passports. They could not imagine what their fate might have been yesterday had it not been for the drunken interference of their host. Nor could they imagine how they were to be delivered from other similar predicaments in which they were liable to fall. They hoped that the Colonel would be sober when he would make his appearance in the morning. It was impossible for them to form any idea as to what his conduct would be. If sober, he might see that he had made a mistake in meddling with their case. How easily he might say that he had taken "a wee drap too much," and that he had acted under its influence, and how sorry he was, and all that. It would be easy, and one must say, naturally so.

They were lounging in the parlor waiting, there was nothing else to do. Finally they heard the clatter of a horse's feet, and looking out saw the Colonel dashing up the avenue to the house. They could but admire his fine horsemanship. Dismounting and turning his horse over to a servant, he hurried into the house, meeting his company (?) in a most friendly way.

"Good-morning, good-morning," was his greeting. "I have been over to town to say to the rabble that I would be personally responsible for you; and that if any of them thought there was going to be any hearing in the case, that they were very much mistaken—and that was to be the end of it."

As if having forgotten himself, he turned to the lady and bowed, saying,

"I beg your pardon, Madam, I have not inquired how you rested last night."

"Exceedingly well, I thank you. We are very much refreshed."

"Then if you are ready, we will go into breakfast. Allow me to show you the way."

Breakfast concluded, they repaired to the front piazza. The morning was bracingly cool, and the outlook from the house over the Colonel's wide-spreading plantation was lovely to behold indeed, marred for the travelers only by the constant thought uppermost in their minds—what next?

The position was becoming exceedingly embarrassing. To confide everything to an entire stranger, where there was so much at stake, was scarcely to be thought of; yet, what else was to be done. If fortunate enough to reach the Confederate lines, how were they to pass? So far, they had as far as possible kept away from towns and railroads; but they found as they approached the vicinity of Richmond that all the roads were guarded; and it would be a disconcerting ordeal, indeed, to pass so near her husband, whom she dared not meet.

The Colonel's chivalry kept him from asking, "Who are you, and where are you going?" Mak-

ing a plausible excuse, he withdrew for some time, leaving them quite alone. Taking advantage of his absence, they discussed the pros and cons touching their situation. The young man, lamenting his nervous condition, would have to leave it to the discretion of his companion.

"Then," said she, "I will depend upon my intuitions, which tell me that we can trust the quixotic element in Colonel McGympsey's nature. If I am not mistaken in him, he will accept our statement as readily as any man in the world."

So it was arranged; and when the Colonel returned, she said to him that they would like to have a strictly private talk with him. He immediately consented, and led the way into the parlor, closing the door. An hour was spent in what the Colonel facetiously called "executive session." He was the first one to come out, which he did alone, wiping the perspiration from his face—evidently he was greatly wrought up. He strode to the front veranda, standing with his arms akimbo.

"Well," was his exclamation, "if this ain't a de'il of a muddle, Jim McGympsey is a fool! How is it to be done? But—she is a lady—and what is a gentleman to do? Hey?" He scarcely expected an answer, seeing that he was entirely alone,—unless it was Colonel McGympsey sober, communing with Colonel McGympsey drunk,—so it must have been, for the answer came from the latter gentleman,

"I said that I would be responsible for them; and McGympsey never goes back on his word. How's that? Say? Well, no harm shall come to the Confederacy from them—ain't that straight,

Jim? And I have promised them," chucking his thumb over his shoulder, in the direction of the parlor, "that they shall go through.—The de'il I have!— Well, McGympsey never goes back on his word. But how? There comes the rub! Jim, wouldn't a drop of corn juice help you out?" "No," answered James (sober), "you must promise me that you will not touch another drop until this business is done." "Done," said Jim, "that's a bargain!"

Thrusting his hands down into his trousers pockets, he strode up and down the veranda several times at a rapid pace; then he deliberately walked back into the parlor, and after staring at the fugitives for a full minute he said,

"I'll do it—if—you will leave everything to me."

"We place ourselves in your hands, Colonel, with every confidence."

"Then for the present you will wait right here. The provost marshal in town is disposed to be officious—as he ought to be—as he ought to be—we can't deny that—we can't blame him—but—I'll straighten it out with him. Make yourselves at home—call for whatever you want—everything here is at your command."

They saw nothing more of him until nearly night. They dined alone, and their suspense was exceedingly trying. Would their host return drunk or sober? From yesterday's experience, they feared drunk. The only jar that had occurred in the "executive session" was when something was said of compensating him for his help to them—for his time and trouble. He was incapable of saying any-

thing rude to a lady, so he looked out of the window and addressed himself,

"McGympsey, if you were capable of doing this thing for money, I would have you shot to-morrow morning at sunrise." And there the subject was dropped. In this same "executive session," when the explanation was becoming painfully disconcerting, he had stopped them, saying,

"Say no more, you are a lady in distress; as a gentleman, I am bound to assist you. That is all that is necessary for me to know." It was at this point that he had withdrawn from the room.

When he returned late in the evening it was evident that he had had a stormy day; and judging from his excited condition, they thought at first that he had been drinking; and the thought was naturally discouraging. The idea of being forced to place themselves wholly in the hands of a man that was liable to get drunk, possibly at the most critical moment, was not very assuring. He stormed the premises, and not infrequently used some very emphatic language; but when he came into the house he was perfectly quiet and respectful; and his guests had the satisfaction of finding that he was sober. The fact that he should be able to go through with an exciting day, without indulging in drink, went far to convince them that their confidence had not been misplaced. At an early hour after tea, he excused himself, and they saw nothing more of him until early the next morning at breakfast. When they came out from that meal they saw their carry-all standing in front of the door, with a fine pair of mules attached to it, in lieu of their inferior ones.

"It does not look very hospitable, but it is necessary that we break camp at once," said the Colonel.

No explanation was made. Their scanty luggage was soon gathered and placed in the conveyance, together with the Colonel's kit and some other articles that his forethought had suggested as necessary to their comfort, including a tent. His saddle-horse stood waiting. Everything being in readiness, the Colonel mounted and led the way until they came near the town. Here he halted and instructed them to wait there until he should clear the streets, when they were to lose no time in following him. Evidently he was going to resort to some ruse, and Mrs. De Mar became somewhat nervous; but when she remembered what a detention meant to them, she nerved herself to do and dare anything that he might suggest.

Buttoning his coat across his chest, and pushing his hat up in front, he put spurs to his horse and made a dash for the main street, yelling,

"Clear the track, here comes your uncle," and the crowd scattered right and left to get out of his way, knowing that he would ride over them if they did not. Mrs. De Mar and her companion could scarcely realize that he was not drunk.

"Look out," said the intendant, "yonder comes McGympsey, drunk already," and he made a dash for his open door.

"Ah, there!" shouted the little marshal, as he hustled himself well onto the sidewalk.

"Steady," roared the Colonel, and his horse came to a standstill. He shied his hat up into the air, and dextrously caught it as it descended, shouting at the

top of his voice, "*Hic hic, cujus cujus, hi hi, omnibus populorum—git.*"

The crowd flattened themselves against the walls—the little marshal hurrying off down a side-alley to get a posse, forgetting to come back until the Colonel had terrorized every one off the street, and had leisurely ridden through, followed by the carryall. When they were well clear of the town he slowed up until the carryall had overtaken him, and said, with a quizzical expression on his face,

"That is the kind of passport—when you haven't a better one."

From the very nature of the case, they must needs keep clear of the towns and as much as possible out of the highway of travel. They were soon approaching the two great contending armies, both alert, each powerful in one way or another. Both fighting for what they believed to be right. Which was right may not be answered until after we, our children and theirs shall have passed away; therefore we will not puzzle our brains about it—certainly not quarrel over it.

By flanking and tacking, the Colonel had engineered his convoy safely around General Lee's army. Finally, from the top of a high hill, between the two armies, they could see the columns of dust rising from the moving Union army.

The Colonel called a halt:

"Now, Madam, my task is accomplished," and there was something of a tender pathos in the tone of his voice; while there was a touch of Knight-errantry in his appearance, as he sat there on his fine horse, erect—forceful—rough—but with a

heart as tender as a woman's—sitting there all unconscious of having done a knightly thing. "I did not engage to conduct you into the enemy's lines—I could not do that. I promised to bring you into their immediate neighborhood—yonder are your friends. If I have done a disloyal act—may the good Lord forgive me. You were a lady in distress, I, a Southern man. Here and now we part—your obedient servant." With his head bared and bowed, he quickly and dexterously backed his horse some paces, and turned and rode away, allowing never a word of thanks. When the carriage had moved on for some distance, he turned and looked after it, until it passed out of sight; then he rode on, wondering if he had done right. He would have done the same thing again.

It was a most lovely morning as Mrs. De Mar and her companion moved down the hill. A strange sensation came to them. Through innumerable anxieties they had come, but with the invincible Colonel McGympsey, full of resources in every emergency, as their conductor. Now they are cut loose with much the same feeling that a child, in learning its first steps, must experience when the parent's guiding hand is first withdrawn. But as they were now outside of the Confederate lines, and saw the unmistakable evidences of their near proximity to the Union army, Mrs. De Mar said,

"Well, dearie, we will soon be beyond pursuit. Will it not be a great relief? Safe from all pursuit. What a load it will remove from our minds; and how thankful I am to our good, old friend—the Colonel."

“Yes, indeed, dear Lilian, we owe the success of our escape to Colonel McGympsey, beyond a doubt; and I shall never forget his kindness and generosity; but, dear, at last, how much more do I owe you? And how shall I ever repay you for the sacrifices you have made in love for me, dearest one?” And leaning over, he took her in his arms, and kissed her—and kissed her.

CHAPTER XLI

Doctor Green sat in front of his tent smoking his meerschaum. He was a fine specimen of the old Virginia gentleman. His locks had grown white in the service of the United States Navy; and he had been on duty at the Isthmus of Panama when the news reached him that Virginia had followed South Carolina out of the Union. It was the expected that had happened this time, and Doctor Green's mind had been made up. As dear as was the service to his heart,—whose every fiber and every impulse was enlisted in it—he had walked the decks of men-of-war for thirty years,—yet, so thoroughly imbued was his mind with the doctrines of States' rights, and love for his dear, old native State, there was no room for doubt as to where his duty lay. He had been opposed to secession from the first, as being impolitic; but when the majority decided otherwise, his resignation went in on the spot, and he hurried to tender his services to the Confederate States Government. His good heart, his congenial manners, and his loyalty to his friends, made friends for him of all with whom he came in contact.

Belonging to his military family were a number of surgeons and assistant surgeons who looked up to him as they would have done to their fathers. Near him, as we see him this morning, are Doctors De Mar and Osseous, and Colonel Hanson, a staff officer.

"Colonel," said Doctor Green, "we are very pleasantly situated here after the constant moving that we have had. If 'our friends, the enemy,' would just keep quiet for a while, I would be greatly obliged to them."

"Amen," said Doctor De Mar, as he leaned back in a lounging chair. "'A little more slumber, a little more sleep, and a little more folding the hands together,' as it were."

"If there is anything more uncertain than what we will be doing in the near future," said Colonel Hanson, "it is the uncertainty of the movements of 'our friends' over there," pointing with the stem of his pipe in the direction of Washington, D. C.

"I suppose," said Doctor De Mar, "it is about time to organize an 'on to Richmond.' The traveling, however, is not good in that direction; and my advice to them is to keep quiet. The nearer they approach Richmond, the worse the traveling is going to be. Why is it that some people cannot be quiet? It is so much nicer every way; besides, it might conduce to longevity in their case. Now, we have no disposition to interfere with those fellows over there. If they would pick up their marbles and go home, all would be forgiven, and that would end all this foolish row, and, to put it mildly, save lots of trouble."

"Suppose you suggest it to them," said Doctor Osseous. "I doubt if they have looked at it from your standpoint."

"If I happen to think of it, I will do so, the first time we meet," said Doctor Jack, "if you will introduce us."

"Oh, they will not stand on formality," said Doctor Osseous, "just pitch right in and have your say. If they do not fall in with your views, there will be no harm done."

"I am not at all sure about that. To my way of thinking, these chaps can make themselves very disagreeable when we make an advance," said Doctor Jack.

"Probably they might accept your advice more willingly than they would your bullets—or—even your pills."

"Come," said Doctor Jack, "that last is 'the most unkindest cut of all.' Ah, yonder comes the mail."

"Things are ominously mum about headquarters just now," said Colonel Hanson. "An order was issued at dress parade last evening, stopping all furloughs for the present."

"Well, that will not be very disappointing to any of this crowd," said Doctor Jack, "we are not expecting any just now. You know, 'Blessed is he that expecteth nothing, for he shall not be disappointed.' I will go and get my mail. I am more interested in that than I am in furloughs. That orderly will go to every tent before he comes to mine."

"What a splendid fellow Jack is," said Doctor Osseous, as they watched him as he went.

"There never was a better in the world," said Doctor Green. "He is one of the most popular surgeons in the army; especially with the men in the line. He is one of the most conscientious men I have ever known. He treats a sick soldier as if he were one of his best paying patients at home, and

that is hard to do when the rascals are playing off on you at every chance, and shooting your precious pills into the bushes as soon as you turn your back."

"That is provoking, when we have so much trouble in getting a little physic," said Doctor Osseous.

"Yes," said Doctor Green, "that is one of the troubles and trials of an army surgeon; but we haven't many De Mars. I am sure that he gives every poor fellow the benefit of the doubt. I am glad that he is so happily married. If there ever was a man that deserved a good, loving wife, it is Jack De Mar. I have no doubt but that his wife blesses the day when she said yes—to him."

Rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat—goes the surgeon's call, and each went to his several duties. Ten minutes later an orderly stepped into Doctor Green's tent.

"Doctor, Doctor De Mar asks if you will be so kind as to excuse him from duty this morning."

"Tell him most certainly. Anything the matter with the Doctor?"

"He seems very much distressed," said the orderly, "but he said nothing further than to ask that he be excused from duty this morning."

"Orderly, take this note to Doctor Tuckem, who will take Doctor De Mar's duties this morning and until further orders."

An hour later—as soon as Doctor Green had a spare moment—he hastened to Doctor De Mar's tent. He was met at the entrance by Rufus, the Doctor's faithful body-servant, whose usual bright, happy face was now sad and dejected.

"Is the Doctor within, Rufus?"

"Yes, Doctor, but he asked ter be 'scused from seein' any one dis mawnin'. I's very sorry, sah."

"That is all right, Rufus; don't let any one disturb him, if he is not feeling well. Let me know if there is anything that I can do for him," and the old Doctor turned away; but, finding that the servant was following him, he stopped until he came up.

"'Scuse me, Doctor," said Rufus, in a subdued voice, "will yer please come back arfter er while; Marse Jack seems in er bad way; an' I knows dat he'll see you 'fore any one else."

"Certainly, I will come back—say in an hour," and the good old Doctor went away, wondering what the trouble could be with his young friend, who while he was rarely ever hilarious, was rarely depressed by anything. The Doctor looked at his watch several times in his impatience, before he decided that it was time to go back. When he went, he found Rufus still at his post.

"Marse Jack hain't called sence you wuz here, Doctor. I'll go in an' see if he wants ter see yer." The old Doctor heard Doctor Jack say,

"Ask Doctor Greem to please excuse me," and he called back to him,

"Certainly, Jack, don't let me disturb you. I was afraid that you were ill. Let me know if there is anything that I can do," and was turning away when Doctor Jack called to him,

"Please come in, Doctor."

On entering, he found his young friend stretched on his cot, with an unutterable woe written in every lineament of his face—tear-stained and convulsed.

Doctor Green, usually so self-possessed, who for years had trained his face to disguise his feelings, started back in profound amazement. How could so great a change be wrought in one's appearance in so short an interval!

"Great Heavens! Doctor, what is the matter?" was his exclamation.

"Give me a moment, my friend," and it was pitiable to see his effort to control himself—the great, strong young man of an hour ago, crushed and broken like some tender thing of spring-tide. Finally he managed to say, with tears streaming down his cheeks,

"In all the world—my dear friend—there is no man—to whom I could talk now—just now—as freely as I can to you. I must talk to some one, or I shall die. Read that," handing him a letter, "it will explain all that I know. Oh, my God—oh, my God!" he wailed as he buried his face in the covering of his cot. The letter ran:

"My dear Doctor:

"I do not know but that I may be alarming you unnecessarily, but I can not wait to determine that point. Your faithful old servant Lot has just been in to see me, and says that Mrs. De Mar has left home under such circumstances as to convince him that she has gone entirely away. He is satisfied that she did not go alone, as a young man, who had been in the neighborhood, disappeared at the same time.

"Lot asked for a pass and sufficient means to enable him to follow her. After consulting with our mutual friend Judge Strong, we decided that it was

best to trust Lot's judgment and discretion in the case, rather than sending out a general alarm.

"You will be advised of the first word of news that we receive. In the mean time, might it not be best for you to come home? Advise me if there is anything that I, or any of your numerous friends, can do for you.

"I will add that not a word is abroad of the matter.

"Believe me ever to remain,

"Your most devoted and true friend,

"LAUGHLIN McLAUGHLIN."

With a hand trembling with emotion, the old Doctor handed the letter back to Doctor Jack, who took it and looked at it, in a dazed kind of way; not reading, but looking at it as a whole, turning it over and over again as he gazed at it. A strange expression came into his face—so strange that Doctor Green became alarmed, and he hastened to say,

"My dear boy, there is some terrible mistake here; this can not be true. Mr. McLaughlin and Judge Strong seem to have acted entirely upon the negro's information; was that justifiable? Might he not have been too hasty in his conclusions? You know how excitable negroes are. Let's hope for the best. Do you not agree with me?"

"No, Doctor, Lot would never have gone to one outside of the family with a scandal, if there had been a possibility of mistake. I have every confidence in his judgment and in his loyalty to the family. No one could be more jealous of our good name."

"For that very reason he may have allowed his anxiety to over-step his judgment. There is some awful mistake," said Doctor Greem.

"There certainly must be some mistake," said Doctor Jack, "but I cannot believe that Lot would make such a blunder as that."

"Without question, you must go home at once."

"But, Doctor, you have forgotten the order issued at dress parade last evening—'No furloughs.'"

"That is true, I had forgotten that order," and the old Doctor sprang to his feet and strode back and forth the length of the tent.

"It will be risky, and may cost both of us our commissions, but it must be done. I can put you on detached service, so that you will not be on regular duty. Stop, I am going too fast. An hour ago an order was issued that only officers and men on duty were to be allowed the countersign until further orders—I may not give it to one of my subordinates who is not on duty," and again the old Doctor strode back and forth, thinking with all his might. Looking at his watch, he said,

"Hurry up, Jack, and come to my tent within the next twenty minutes." And he rushed out of the tent and was gone. The mere having something to do and to do quickly helped the Doctor to get control of himself. Calling Rufus to assist him, he was soon ready to sally forth and present himself at Doctor Greem's tent.

A casual observer would scarcely have taken him for the jovial young man that went swinging away after the mail carrier an hour ago, full of life and vigor, his face bright with anticipation of a letter

from his beloved wife, down in his Southern home, waiting and praying for his safe return, whom he loved better than all the world, in whom centered every ambition and aspiration of his heart. No greater shock could have come to him than this. Through all the passing years, through all the vicissitudes that had intervened between those trying colonial days and these of to-day, no shadow of shame had ever fallen athwart the name of De Mar—now—this! Possibly the thought comes to him, that he alone is to blame for it all—had he held to the traditions of the family, this would have been impossible. If so, it but added to the pain that was racking his poor heart there that bright morning as he was entering Doctor Green's tent.

"Come in, my boy; I may not give you the countersign; but you can not get to Richmond without it. The officer of the day will be here in a few moments; in the mean time, step into my back tent and keep your ears open; if you should happen to hear anything to your advantage, I may not prevent your making use of it.

Doctor Jack did as he was directed, and had not long to wait before the officer entered. Doctor Green was busy at his desk, and when the officer handed him the little three-cornered billet containing the coveted words, he said, without looking up from his writing,

"What is the countersign, Captain?"

Looking around to satisfy himself that no one was in hearing, he said,

"Saint Petersburg."

"Thank you, Captain; good-morning."

When he was gone, Doctor Jack came forward, and grasping the old Doctor's hand said,

"My dear, good friend, how shall I ever repay you for your kindness! But for you I should have been stranded here; now I may hurry home—but oh, can I call it home—can I ever call it home again?" Seeing that he was about to break down, Doctor Green said to him,

"Now, Jack, you have no time to lose. I have sent Solomon down to your quarters to help Rufus saddle your horses and pack your kit for you. You will have to ride like the old scratch was after you to catch that train out from Gordonsville to-day. A day might mean a great deal, you know. Now, go ahead and hurry up. Let me know if there is anything that I can do for you. I am quite sure you will find that there has been some mistake."

"Heaven grant that it may be so! Good-by, Doctor, good-by." Wringing his good old friend's hand, he hurried out of the tent and went direct to his own quarters, where he found that his friend's forethought had expedited matters very materially. His kit was packed and the horses saddled, and without a thought for his other belongings, he vaulted into his saddle and was gone.

Doctor Green had not thought whether it were better for his young friend to go home or not, or whether he could do any good by going. He only knew that he must get him to doing something with an object in view, to divert his attention; to get his mind, as far as it was possible to do so, off his trouble; otherwise he could not be responsible for the result. Never in his long and varied experience

had he seen a man so thoroughly broken up with any trouble—his sufferings would have touched a heart of stone.

Doctor Greem had given him an order to report at the end of thirty days at Augusta, Georgia, which was supposed to give him ample time. Leaving the horses at Gordonsville, in the care of a quartermaster, they boarded the train for Richmond. The trip was uneventful; though it would have required something of an extraordinary character to divert the Doctor's attention from the pain, the agony, the hope, the despair, the shame, the love, the hate, the anxiety, the impatience that surged through his brain.

He went directly to Beechwood before going home, in order that he might have the latest news from Lot—it was through Lot that he expected to hear first, knowing his resources and activity. Arriving at Judge Strong's residence, he was received with open arms to their hearts and home. While he read in their faces the pleasure that his friends felt on seeing him, he also read that they had no good news for him. The Judge would fain have deferred broaching the painful subject; but knowing his young friend's impatience, took him into his private office and closed the door.

"We have not had a word from Lot since he left," began the Judge, "and how stupid it was of us not to have given Lot a number of addressed envelopes, which he could have dropped in the different post-offices on his route. Then, in a way, we could have kept track of him, at least, and have known in what direction he was going; as it is, we

haven't the slightest idea, and I am so sorry for that blunder."

"That would have been an excellent idea," said Doctor Jack, "but one can not always think of everything on the spur of the moment."

The Judge refrained as long as possible from going into the particulars. It was bad enough to think it, but ten times harder when it came to putting it into so many matter-of-fact words; that was a very different thing. And the Judge never had a more painful duty to perform; but perform it he did, and gave all the particulars as far as they were known. And when Doctor Jack was told that his wife had gone off with another man—no one knew who he was—his agony knew no bounds; he was utterly overwhelmed with the disgrace of it. Sorrow at her departure was bad enough; but he was totally unprepared for this disgrace—disgrace through his wife in whom he had unbounded confidence—he could not realize it. It was impossible; he could believe anything but that.

"No, no, no, Judge, my dear friend, do not tell me that; I can not believe that. I would not hear that from any one else; I know that you believe it; but it is not true—oh, my God, it is not true—it cannot be!" The Judge thought it best to let him give vent to his feelings, but at last he became alarmed and wanted to send for a physician.

"Please do not, Judge; I do not want any one to see me; I could not endure that. If you will please send me home in your closed carriage I will be better there," and he made superhuman efforts to control himself.

No pen can describe his wan, worn face, blanched like death. No gift of tongue could tell what his head and heart suffered—the dearest idol of his heart broken and cast into bitterest ashes, his young life blasted forever.

Arriving at home, he shut himself up in his room, and refused himself to kith and kin alike. All day he moaned, “Ruined—ruined—ruined!” Day after day this went on, until the servants about the house became demoralized.

“Ef only Uncle Lot wuz here,” said old Aunt Tilly, “Marse Jack always would listen ter Uncle Lot. When he wuz er boy, he would listen ter ’im w’en he wouldn’t hear er word outen any one else. Lot had no bizniss goin’ off, noways.”

Doctor Green, hearing through Mr. McLaughlin of Doctor Jack’s condition, wrote him and ordered him back to camp, satisfied that matters would go on from bad to worse. But no attention was paid to the order—if Doctor Jack read it, which was very doubtful. He ate, scarcely anything; only when old Aunt Tilly would prepare some extra dainty thing, and then stand by and beg, would he touch food. Day and night it was the same thing, “Ruined—ruined—ruined! O Lilian, my love, my life, how could you betray the trust that you knew so well that I had in your fidelity? How could you—how could—how could you? O Hal, my brother, why did you not let me go in your stead? It would have been so much better! You, at least, would have held to the traditions of the family—you would not have married a stranger, and wrought all this trouble and disgrace. It would

have been so much better that I should have died upon that accursed field! For shame on myself! This is disloyalty to my little wife. No, no, no—this can not be true! There is some terrible mistake about it all—Lilian—my Lilian could do no wrong! It's all a hideous nightmare. She was not herself—or she never would have done this thing.” Then, “Ruined—ruined—ruined!” was his piteous cry, day and night, the mourner refusing to be comforted.

Receiving no reply to his order, Doctor Green made a special application through the Surgeon-General's office, and obtained a leave of absence for ten days and hastened to Carolina to see his young friend. It was the announcement of Doctor Green's name that first aroused Doctor Jack from his stupor. Hearing that his old friend had come, he aroused himself and came down to meet him; and the meeting was most pathetic indeed. The great strong men rushed into each other's arms and wept like children. Doctor Jack made every effort to entertain his friend, and the effort did him good.

A servant came in with a note from Little Miss Tippers asking if he would see Miss Fannie De Mar and herself. The Doctor wrote in reply, asking them to do him the kindness to come to breakfast the next morning, adding that his old friend Doctor Green was with him; and he knew that he was finding him the poorest company imaginable, and how glad he would be if they would come and help him entertain him.

The trains had been slow, and besides had missed a connection, so there was but this day left of the

time Doctor Green could spend here. After they had a long talk and some refreshments, Doctor Green said,

"Well, Jack, make your arrangements; you know we must break camp to-morrow for Virginia."

"My dear friend, I cannot go."

"Oh, but you must; I gave my parole for you; we would both lose our commissions; you would not place me in that position, you know."

In answer a touch of the bell was given, and Rufus appeared.

"Rufus, put my kit in order; and tell Cæsar to come to the library in an hour from now." Turning to Doctor Green he said, "How can I face the world with all this disgrace hanging over me?"

"My dear boy, you have done nothing to disgrace yourself. Disgrace cannot attach except for our own actions. You have done nothing wrong, nor must you now, by deserting your post—and your friend."

"I will do my duty to my country and to you, my dear friend; but that will not remove the disgrace, nor my shame of it. I and my wife are one, and will be one, not only while this world shall last, but throughout limitless eternity. My poor little wife—my poor little wife! What witching alchemy could have wrought your ruin? I loved you so! I loved you so! I love you yet!"

Doctor Green, seeing his growing distress, that he was losing all control of himself, went over and put his arms around him and kissed his forehead.

"Forgive me, my good friend, I forgot, I forgot!" said Doctor Jack.

"That is right; be a man." Though said with the very best of intentions, this hurt, and hurt intensely. Doctor Jack arose and walked over to the bay window on the other side of the room, and below his breath said, "Oh, that the time should ever have come, when a friend could admonish me, to be a man!" and never from that moment did he say one word about his troubles to any living being, except Uncle Lot.

When the next morning came, Doctor Jack looked forward impatiently for the arrival of Miss Fannie De Mar and Little Miss Tippers to breakfast. While there would be but an hour before boat time, yet he found himself so anxious to see them. They did not come, and breakfast was kept back until the last moment possible for them; and still they did not come, and the Doctor racked his brain for a reason. Alas! Alas!

When they were ready for the start, Doctor Green noticed that his friend had replaced his uniform for a suit of citizen's clothes. At first he did not think anything of it, until he noticed that the uniform had been left out of the kit altogether.

"You are leaving your uniform, Jack, you must not forget that."

"I shall have no use for it," said Doctor Jack. "I am going back to the army, but I am going into the line."

"Tut—tut—tut," said his friend. "Well, have your own way."

CHAPTER XLII

The suggestion to go to Sandowns had come from Miss Fannie De Mar, who was spending the day with Little Miss Tippers. These two were much together always. Their tastes and impulses were much the same; but since the disappearance of Mrs. Jack De Mar they had been almost inseparable. Both had been terribly shocked and mortified by that event. Madam Rumor, as a matter of course, was having her say; and as usual everything was magnified and distorted that was capable of either. The reports set afloat by that ancient dame were numerous and curious, not to say shocking. What of them reached Doctor Jack's ears, no one knew. When these two young ladies were alone they could talk of nothing but their friend's trouble. When in other company they did what they could to repress false or conjectural reports. The unfortunate wife had their loyal confidence; the no less unfortunate husband had their sincerest sympathy.

"Dear, let's go and see if Cousin Jack will not receive us," Miss De Mar had said.

"I am informed," replied Little Miss Tippers, "that he has positively refused every one; but we might write him a note asking if we may come. If he does not wish to see us, it might be some comfort for him to know that we are in sympathy with him and want to see him. Will you write?"

"No, dear, you write; but you might write in our joint names."

So it came about that the note was written, and to their delight resulted in the invitation to breakfast the next morning, to meet Doctor Green.

"I will ride home now," said Miss De Mar, "as I shall want to make some change in my dress. I will return by time in the morning, and we will go together. I am so charmed that Jack has consented to see us. Good-by, dearie, good-by," and warmly kissing her little friend, she rode away. Little Miss Tippers had returned to the house when she heard the clatter of a horse's feet approaching. Looking out, she saw Miss De Mar returning. Hastening to the gate, she asked,

"Did you forget something?"

"No—I just want to say good-by and kiss you again."

Laughingly Little Miss Tippers held up her face to be kissed again and again. She afterward remembered the sad, sweet smile that was on her friend's face then.

"Be sure to come early," said the little lady, "I will be ready and waiting." For answer, she had only another kiss—warm and loving—but never a word. Miss De Mar again cantered down the road. There was something in all this that caused little Miss Tippers to linger at the gate, looking after her friend as she went. Just before passing the first turn in the road, Miss De Mar reined in Queen, and turning, looked back and threw a kiss to her little friend whom she loved so dearly.

Bright and early on "the to-morrow" morning, Little Miss Tippers was astir. She had bestowed unusual care on her toilet. Her pony phaeton was

at the gate. Having gathered and arranged some choice flowers to take with her, she sat down on the veranda to await her friend. She waited with patience for quite a while, the peace of the lovely morning hour filled her soul, the pleasure of the duty lying right before her, filling her mind; so time sped all unheeded.

Finally, Marm Milly came and asked her little Missus if she would have a cup of coffee. "It's er gettin' breakfast time."

"Is it really so late as that? I am expecting Miss De Mar every moment. I cannot understand her being late."

It would not have expedited matters if she had gone to meet her, as they would have to return this way; so she waited. The boat whistle blew at the landing. She went out to the gate to see if her friend was coming. No. Was it possible there was any misunderstanding? Leaving word with Marm Milly for Miss De Mar, that she would drive on slowly, and that she could overtake her, she entered her phaeton and started on, holding the pony to a walk, constantly looking back, until she came in sight of Sandowns, where she saw the carriage and buckboard returning from the direction of the boat landing.

"Good-morning, Cæsar. Some one going away this morning?"

"Yessum. Marse Jack an' de gentlemun gone back ter Ferginny."

"Did Miss Fannie come over to breakfast?"

"No, Missus. Marse Jack 'spected yer an' Miss Fannie ter breakfast. He was mighty dis'pointed,"

answered Cæsar, adding, "I think he leff er note fer yer wid Marm Tilly."

Little Miss Tippers drove to the house, and was met at the door by Marm Tilly, who was drying the hot tears from her face.

"Come right in, honey. We's been lookin' fer yer an' Miss Fannie fer de las' two hours, an' kept breakfust waitin' ter de berry las' minit. Set right down an' I'll hev yer some breakfas' in er jiffy. Here is er note Marse Jack leff fer yer. Yer can read hit w'ile I gits yer some hot coffee."

This was the Doctor's note:

"My Very Dear Friends—My Best Beloved Friends:

"I cannot express my disappointment. I did not know until after writing the note that I would be going this morning. Now, I cannot forgive myself for having shut myself out all these days from you two. Oh, these days—these dark, dark days! They are burned into my memory for all coming time. Over and over again, my poor, broken heart has yearned for one comforting word; but my cowardly pride shrank from mortal gaze. Nothing could have prevented me from waiting to see you, except to protect my good old friend, Doctor Green, who jeopardized his commission to serve me. No selfish motive could make me fail him now; you would not have had me act differently, I know.

"I dare not attempt to put on paper what I should have wished to say to you two. I feel—ought I weigh down your dear, warm hearts with it?—but I feel sure that we three now will never meet again in

this world. I can not say more. Only, if either of you meet my wife—my own little wife, in whatever world, before I do, tell her—oh! tell her that my heart is true to her—that I know that she could not have done any intentional wrong.

“Good-by and good-by,

“JACK.”

In parenthesis, it may be said—Doctor Jack was fully impressed with the belief that his wife was dead.

When Marm Tilly came to announce breakfast she found that Little Miss Tippers had gone. Doctor Jack's note had banished every thought or wish, save that to go to Miss De Mar and be alone with her. She hurried back to her cottage, hoping every moment to meet her friend on the way. Arriving there, she tarried only long enough to ascertain that Miss De Mar had not been there. She hastened on toward Chatham. Reaching that place, her first words were,

“Where is Fannie?”

“We thought that she was with you,” answered Mrs. De Mar. “Last night she ordered her horse for an early hour this morning, saying that you and she were to breakfast at Sandowns. We were so glad to hear that the dear boy was coming around to himself. Did she not come?”

“No, Mrs. De Mar, and I am very uneasy concerning her.”

“I cannot think that there is any occasion for anxiety. She may have misunderstood and have gone direct to Sandowns, expecting to meet you

there. You know there is a nearer way than by your place."

"No, she did not go; I have just come from there. There may be no occasion, but I am exceedingly uneasy."

"Oh, Fan is all right," said the father, "you need not be uneasy about her. She is well mounted and is an expert horsewoman. She was quite well, and in the best of spirits, over Jack having sent for you two. Did you see Jack?"

Little Miss Tippers now had no thought even for Doctor Jack's troubles.

"It may be silly of me; but I must find her—if she is to be found."

The father was disposed to pooh-pooh the whole matter; not so his wife, whose mother-love was quicker to take alarm.

"May I be permitted to go to Fan's room?" asked Little Miss Tippers.

"Certainly, and I will go with you," said the mother, adding to her husband, "Will you please ascertain if Fanny's horse is here?"

"Tut, tut, you women are getting up a scare about nothing. Fan is well able to take care of herself." Nevertheless, he went out and called a stable boy.

Little Miss Tippers found the young lady's room unoccupied. It was just as she had left it. Little Miss Tippers ran her eyes quickly over the tables and dresser. If she was looking for some message left behind, she was not rewarded for the search; there was nothing of the kind. She threw herself upon her friend's bed, burying her face in the pil-

low where that dear head had last rested, and gave way to a flood of tears. It was a most unusual thing for that young lady to give expression to her feelings in this manner—accustomed as she was to the most trying conditions under every conceivable circumstance. This thought added to the mother's fast-growing fears. Going over to the little woman she laid a gentle hand upon her head saying,

"Dear, why are you so uneasy—so much alarmed about my daughter? Have you any especial grounds for it? Are you aware of anything of which I am ignorant?"

"No," said the little woman, lifting her tear-stained face from the pillow, which she still clasped to her bosom. "No, nothing tangible—nothing real—but there is something at my heart bids it fear." Rising, she added, "Come, we may be wasting precious moments," and she hastened down stairs, followed by the mother, where they were joined by Mr. De Mar, who had just returned with the stable boy, who gave the following information:

"Yaas, sah. Dan saddled Queen fur Miss Fannie soon dis mawnin'. De sun had just riz; an' I fotched 'er aroun' an' held 'er till Miss Fannie come. Yaas, sah. Queen wuz all right an' as lively as er cricket. W'en she wuz ready ter go, she stood dere lookin' at de house er long time. Then she said, 'Good-by, Harry; be er good boy,' an' w'en she got down ter dat las' big live-oak yonder, she stopped Queen an' looked back. En she tu'ned an' rode erway, an' dat wuz de las' I seed uv 'er."

"She may have changed her mind," said the father, "and have gone somewhere else."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Little Miss Tippers. "It was her suggestion to go to Sandowns; and she was greatly pleased when we received Doctor Jack's note. There was nothing she desired so much. I am quite sure that she did not change her mind." Then she recounted to the parents the manner of her leave-taking the afternoon before, saying good-by with unusual feeling, riding off some distance and then coming back to say good-by again. Then she produced Doctor Jack's note, with its forebodings. The mother was deeply impressed and begged that immediate search should be made, in which she was seconded by Miss Tippers. The father proposed that a quiet inquiry should first be made, before any general alarm should be sent out; but such things can not be quietly done. In a very few hours it was known far and near that Miss De Mar was missing.

"Some one missing"—be it whom it may—always awakens the keenest interest; more especially in a rural district, where life runs the even tenor of its course for months and years without one tragic event to stir its pulse or excite its wonder. And when some one respected and beloved as was Miss De Mar is missing, excitement gives way to awe; and words utterly fail to express the distress and pain of it all. Homes were literally deserted; the negroes left their work unchecked, and in hundreds scoured the country for miles around, searching every nook and corner—the probable and the improbable places alike. Men on horseback rushed

here and there following up this and that clue, often riding miles to investigate a horse track. Ladies were driven hither and thither to make inquiries. Great lines of men, black and white, were formed and swept forest and field. Throughout the day and night the search was kept up. Not a trace was found—not one.

Old Uncle Cato, the head negro on the Chatham plantation, had been indefatigable in the search. For twenty-four hours he had not fagged one moment; he had had not one mouthful of food. At dawn the next morning he came home and went to the kennel and took out a dog that had been a favorite with Miss De Mar, and when permitted to do so would go with her in her horseback excursions. Cato led the dog some distance down the road she had taken, and then turned him loose. He began sniffing the ground and soon started off at a brisk trot, Cato following. When he came to where a bridle-path turned off—it was a short cut to Miss Tippers's home, leading down near the river—the dog took that. When near the bend of the river he left the path at a right angle toward the river.

“My Lawd!” exclaimed Cato, “ef dat dog ain’t goin’ ter de Shiverin’ Sands.” This was the head of a cove in the river, where there was quite an area of quicksand, to which no bottom had ever been found. A fence rail ten feet long pitched into it would disappear. It swallowed everything; it gave back nothing. Grass grew luxuriantly to its very rim. There was really nothing to warn the unwary of its proximity, nor of its insatiable maw. At this time there was a large honeysuckle bush,

laden with bloom, growing directly on its edge; this was in sight of the bridle-path. In breathless awe Cato followed the dog. He thought that he could discern the impress of a horse's feet on the green turf. This the dog was apparently following, and did follow, to the very edge of the grass. Under his weight, the already broken turf gave away and precipitated him bodily into the treacherous sands, which claimed him as their prey. Every struggle he made to extricate himself only caused him to sink the faster. In less time than it takes to tell it, he had disappeared, nothing but some air bubbles, rising to the surface, showing where he had gone down.

Cato hastened to hunt his master, and returned with him to the Shivering Sands. Together they examined the horse's tracks leading to the sands. There were none leading from it. There were some freshly scattered honeysuckle flowers on the grass, and some resting on the surface of the sands. Cato was sure these were Queen's tracks. He had seen the faithful dog trail them to this spot, and into the sands. Had the dog not followed the gentle hand that had caressed him so often, even unto death's door? Cato thought so. And in the father's mind there remained not a doubt but that his favorite daughter had found a grave in the Shivering Sands. There were suggestions of rigging a tackle to try and drag the sands, but Mr. De Mar discouraged the idea as being impossible of success, and fraught with imminent peril to those who attempted it. A great concourse had assembled, and it was difficult to prevent the more careless from approaching too

near the edge of the grass around the margin of the treacherous sands.

As was to be expected, there were those who pretended not to accept the theory of the Shivering Sands. "Did not Miss De Mar know all about the quicksands? Had she not lived all her life in their proximity? She must have known about them. Doctor Jack, her old lover, whose wife had run away with another man, had been shut up in his house for days and days, not seeing any one, and had only yesterday written her a note making an appointment with her. This morning, of all others, without saying a word to any one he had hurried away, no one knew where. On this identical morning Miss De Mar disappears. Suppose you put this and that together. See?" This is only a specimen of many other slanderous innuendos that were rife in a quiet way.

As the excitement subsided, a fixed gloom settled upon the community. Even the detractors—and certainly little could have been expected of them—missed her cheery, bright face, her ready, kind hand.

Though sore, and heartbroken, Little Miss Tippers went about her work, answering every demand upon her time and care. She served with double alacrity those for whom her friend was wont to care. She worked harder than ever; and it was soon observable that her strength was more easily taxed than of yore. Her step was less elastic; yet, on and on she toiled—for others, always! Never complaining—never saying no, to any new demand.

One of those incongruous things that will weave themselves into our complex lives, despite all sentimentality, might as well be mentioned here—it transpired that Miss De Mar had very recently made her will, giving her vast estate to Doctor Jack De Mar.

CHAPTER XLIII

Nothing further had been said as to Doctor Jack's intentions until they had reached Richmond. The first thing he did was to go to the Surgeon-General's office, where he was kindly received, and where he created no little surprise by saying,

"I have come to tender my resignation as surgeon," and as he said this, he laid his commission on the table in front of him.

"What is the matter, Doctor? I did not dream that you were not satisfactorily placed. I have had always the very best reports of you and your work, from Doctor Green, who I know is your friend. He has told me that he would have recommended you for a Medical Director, only that you had declined it most emphatically when he had mentioned it to you. You can have the promotion any day that you will accept it. As for accepting your resignation, I cannot think of that for a moment—we will not consider that at all."

"I am very much obliged for your kind words Doctor, but I have made up my mind fully. I shall go into the line; not that I have had the slightest cause for complaint; every one has been extremely kind to me, and I beg to express my thanks to you personally."

"Really," said the Surgeon-General, "I am more sorry than I can say to lose you from our department; but, of course, if you have made up your mind, there is nothing left for us but to accept your resignation, as sorry as we are to have to do so. If

at any time you will return to us, remember, I will be only too glad to give you any place within my gift that will suit you—remember that.”

“Thank you, Doctor, very much. I shall not forget,” and he bowed himself out of the room.

Returning to the Ballard and Exchange Hotel, he found his old friend awaiting him.

“Our train goes at 3.30 sharp. We must be on time,” said Doctor Green.

“I am not going to-day, Doctor,” said Doctor Jack. “I have just been up to the Surgeon-General’s office, and handed in my resignation.”

“You haven’t, surely, Jack; you are jesting.”

“I was never more in earnest, I assure you. I shall want a day or two in which to decide where I shall go. I think now I shall go into the cavalry, possibly, as it will furnish the field best suited to my wants just now.”

“That is right; take time to decide; do not act too precipitately, as long as you have taken this step, which I am sure was a mistake. Your forte is surgery; you have been unusually successful, and greatly beloved by the men; the poor boys will miss your kind treatment of them. Think this well over, my dear boy, in all its different lights. It is not too late to reconsider.”

“My mind is made up, Doctor; there is nothing for me but the thickest of the fight.”

Doctor Green became convinced that there was no use in argument, under existing circumstances. For, to be honest, he felt that Jack was doing just about what he would do himself, under the same conditions; so he only said,

"Let me hope, Jack, that you will take service in our corps, where I will at least be near you should anything happen to you, and where you could come to me, should I need you, and where we could see each other occasionally."

"I thank you ever so much, my dear old friend. I can never forget your uniform kindness to me. I am sorry that I cannot listen to your advice. I know that it is sound from your standpoint. Good-by, my best friend, good-by."

"Good-by, dear boy, good-by. May kind Heaven bless you, wherever you may be."

Thus they parted—these two good friends—never to meet again in this world. Doctor Green, with a sad heart going to his duties; Doctor De Mar, to saunter up and down the streets of the Capital of the Confederacy. As he strolled, he soliloquized,

"I should have been utterly miserable in my old haunts, with my old friends. Every recollection would have been a sting; every face would have been a reminder of my disgrace. I will surely be better off among strangers, in new scenes. I must find the most active field for my service. By so doing, I will be of more service to my country, and best subserve my own well being—help myself to throw off this terrible restlessness. My life is ruined—my life is ruined!"

By night he had thoroughly fatigued himself, so that he slept well. The next day was spent in much the same way, walking and thinking—walking and thinking; but he had settled nothing. More than once he considered going back and taking up his

old life—he knew that his commission awaited his wish. Was it not cowardly to shrink from his old, well-trying friends? But surely he ought to be able, with such a large field to select from, to find something that would suit him better. He seemed to be thinking in circles, always coming back again to wish for action, dash, and danger—the more danger the better. He doubtless might not have been really conscious of it; but there is little doubt that he hoped to find the end of his trouble in some supreme act of daring.

When he went to the desk at the hotel office, for his room key that night, he chanced to glance at the register, and his eye caught the name of Colonel Mosby. At the time it meant nothing to him, but after he had retired it occurred to him that Mosby was the man of all others he wanted to see. He made up his mind that he would hunt him up first thing in the morning. The thought banished sleep from his eyes for hours; and when he at last became unconscious, his dreams were vexed by daring charges and stirring routs, himself thrown into all manner of difficult situations, but coming out of them all unscathed. With early dawn he was up and dressed, and was greatly relieved when the clerk at the desk informed him that Colonel Mosby had not left during the night, a possibility that had worried him no little. He hung around the office until he saw the Colonel come down. Introducing himself, he said,

“When you have had your breakfast, I wish to speak with you.”

“If it is on business, my breakfast can wait,” said

the Colonel. "Will you come into the smoking-room?" and he led the way.

"Colonel, I wish to tender my services to you," said Doctor Jack.

"Doctor, I am delighted to have you in my command, though I was not aware that any change was to be made in my surgeon. Your reputation for kindness to the soldiers has reached my command long since, and I know that my men will be delighted to learn that they will fall into your hands when anything happens to them."

"You have mistaken my intentions, Colonel; I come to offer myself as a private. I wish to enroll as such; but I should so much like to be put upon scouting duty, if it is not asking too much—or—unless you have something still more active—I would prefer that."

"Doctor, have you any idea what arduous duties devolve upon my scouts? It is the most dangerous, as well as the most responsible, of all branches of the service."

"I realize its dangers and its responsibilities, and for those very reasons I have selected it."

"That is all right then. When do you wish to enter upon your duties?"

"At once; the sooner, the better I will be pleased."

"You are fortunate in having made your application just now, as my business in the city is to arrange a scouting party within the enemy's lines. It is extra hazardous, as the insurance men say, and will initiate you at once."

"I am at your command, Colonel."

"Have you a good mount?"

"There is none better in the service."

"I am going back to camp this afternoon, and you can accompany me. Our train goes at 3.30. Until then, good-morning."

Camp was reached at six o'clock that evening.

"As I shall not be able to give you time to arrange your mess, Doctor, you will make my headquarters yours."

"Thank you, that is kind."

At headquarters the Doctor had an opportunity of studying Mosby's methods. It was all so different from soldiering that he had known. He found it very interesting as well as instructive. Everything was sharp and went with a snap, that was encouraging to a man who wanted action. There was no dilly-dallying, or want of prompt decision. On the next day Rufus arrived with the Doctor's horses; and that night after supper an orderly was despatched for Captain Evans, who in an incredibly short time made his appearance. Colonel Mosby introduced Doctor Jack to Captain Evans, and informed the latter that the Doctor was to be one of his party of four men who were to undertake to go within the enemy's lines for information. The Captain looked Doctor De Mar over very critically, and then asked,

"Doctor, have you had any experience in scouting?"

"No," the Doctor was sorry to have to say he had not.

"This is extra hazardous business, Colonel; will

it not be a little risky—in fact very risky—to take an entirely new man on this expedition?”

“The Doctor is no new recruit,” answered the Colonel. “He has been in service from the beginning; but he has grown tired of sawing bones, and desires above everything to see something of real soldiering.”

“I beg the Doctor’s pardon. It was of him we have heard so much—that while he was the kindest of surgeons, he would take a hand at the guns until the enemy’s bullets furnished him material to operate upon. I will be pleased, Doctor, to show you something of scouting within the enemy’s lines. It requires a cool head, and, at times, smart heels as well. We are ready, Colonel, for your orders.”

“They are simple. Find out for General Lee how many reserves General Hooker has; where they are located; and, if possible, procure information as to his preparedness for an advance.”

“There is nothing further, Colonel?”

“Nothing; only save your skins, if you can.”

Saluting their superior officer, the Captain and the Doctor retired to make the necessary preparations for their important and dangerous expedition. As they made their way to Captain Evans’s quarters, the Doctor was asked if he had an ordinary suit of clothes.

“Yes,” said the Doctor, “I have a very plain suit of citizen’s clothes, that will attract no special attention.”

“That is good, provided we are not captured. Should that happen, then it is all wrong—spies—see?”

"Yes, I fully understand the difference; but if we are going to be captured, we might as well be shot; for we shall have failed of our mission."

In a very short time, the four men—Captain Evans, Doctor De Mar, John Sligh, and Charlie Frost—stepped out of their tents plain citizens. No weapons were carried except their side-arms; but they were of the best, and as many of them as could be concealed about their persons. Mounting their horses, they moved out of camp without attracting any attention, and were soon stealing toward the enemy's right flank.

They rode steadily until just before day, avoiding pickets and scouting parties—apparently, to the Doctor, as if by instinct. Few words were spoken. More than once the Captain would come to a sudden halt; then he would make a quick dash back in the direction from which they had come. At first all this was very puzzling to the Doctor; but he soon learned that the quick ear of the Captain had discovered danger, where he had been able to detect nothing out of the ordinary. At other times, the Captain's old horse had given him warning. His master was wont to say that old Manassa could smell a blue-coat two miles away, when he would prick his ears and lower his head to the ground.

Toward dawn they made a sharp turn from the road they were pursuing, and going a quarter of a mile down a ravine, halted and went into camp; but this movement was made so quietly that they did not disturb a fox that was sleeping near the place, and it was exceedingly fortunate for them that they did, as we shall see directly. The horses were tethered

and fed; girths were loosened, but the saddles were not removed; a cold luncheon was partaken of; but no preparation was made for sleeping until the fast approaching dawn should reveal their surroundings. As the light grew, they were especially interested in a smoke that began to rise very near their place of concealment. Sligh stole up a tree to reconnoiter. He had not gone up more than twenty feet when he suddenly stopped—every eye below had followed his ascent. When they saw him stop so quickly, they instinctively stooped to the ground. With as little noise as a cat could have made, Sligh slipped down beside his companions. "Yanks," he whispered. In answer to an inquiring look from the Captain, he whispered, "Scouts—ten." Another look from the Captain, "Two hundred yards."

"Devilish close," breathed the Captain.

Charlie Frost slid on his stomach to the root of another tree, which had lower limbs, and raised himself to a standing position behind it and watched their proceedings, from time to time reporting what they were doing.

"Now they are eating their breakfast. Boys, don't you smell that coffee—the real stuff?" whispered Frost. "Now they are saddling their horses." Then a laugh was heard at some jest, never dreaming of the near proximity of an enemy. "Now they are mounting," said Frost. "Coming this way," was his next sententious remark. Every hand grasped a revolver in an instant. The moving of a horse started the fox from his lair, and he dashed across the path of the advancing scouts.

Boylike, not thinking, they raised a whoop, and made a dash after the fox. Having had their fun, they struck for the road farther on, thus missing the Confederate scouts, who replaced their revolvers with thankful hearts. Had it not been for the fox there would have been trouble—and with what result no human mind could have conjectured, so far reaching, in those troublous times, were the results of apparently trivial occurrences. Every school child knows it—"By the loss of a nail—"

When all danger of immediate discovery was past our scouts made themselves comfortable for the day. Doctor De Mar took the first two watches, the novelty of the situation banishing sleep from his eyes. Then by regular reliefs they slept the day away. When one of those "five o'clock owls" began to hoot, Captain Evans's party bestirred themselves to make preparations for the night's work. The horses were fed, their own keen appetites blunted with hard tack and cold bacon; the maps of the country were brought out and carefully studied; every locality and every road firmly fixed in their minds—the slightest mistake might prove fatal to their enterprise. A novice would naturally suppose that their personal safety was of prime importance. Not so—getting the required information and quickly carrying it to their leader was paramount to everything; their safety was only considered as contributing to that end.

Their present position was well on General Hooker's flank, and they hoped to turn it during the coming night. At sundown, Sligh, who was an expert climber, selected the tallest tree near by, and

was soon ascending it with a cat-like agility. At every lift he paused and scanned the surrounding country—up, up, until he reached the dense top, where he seated himself and studied the whole field of view. Having satisfied himself he descended quickly. He had scarcely touched the ground.

“Well?” said Captain Evans.

“There is a small house just ahead—three quarters of a mile. Large camp—mile to the north. Other camps—three, farther to the right—nothing left of us. Shall I interview farm-house?”

“No,” said the Captain, “I had better go.”

“I should like to go with you,” said Doctor De Mar, “to see how it is done.”

“Sorry—too much at stake—two would excite suspicion,” said the Captain.

Scouts seemed naturally to fall into a sententious manner of speaking. Garrulity belongs to the general camp.

“Must practice down-east nasal twang,” continued the Captain, “before undertaking to play the part,” and for his information he rattled off a string of provincialisms in a tone of voice that had required long and patient practice and close study. He had spent hours in the company of prisoners when he could find some typical ones, until he could have fooled one of the elect.

Captain Evans mounted old Manassa and was soon out of sight. Within an hour he was back in camp, with his pockets full of eggs and potatoes, and his head full of information as to where the main camps were, and as to the roads leading to, or around them. The horses were fed again; a small

fire of dry twigs was made, and their eggs and potatoes cooked. In the mean time, the Captain imparted the main points of the information he had gathered at the farm-house. It was a cavalry force that was nearest to them, and that they were constantly changing their position. Snake Bridge was closely guarded. They had hoped to cross there. There were no fords for miles to the left.

"To-night we will have to reconnoiter," said the Captain. "If possible, we will get through. Obligated to get through."

And so it transpired; the whole night was spent in beating around camps and estimating numbers. Then they swam the stream two miles above Snake Bridge and went into camp. They found themselves near a farm-house. Frost bought a basket full of eggs, and went boldly into a camp that was not far away. He sold his eggs at a profit and learned that this was the Thirteenth U. S. Cavalry—about seven hundred strong—and would probably be there for some time. This he learned by going to headquarters and engaging to bring chickens and eggs, if they were going to remain long enough for him to hunt the chickens and eggs.

"Oh, we will be here, or in this neighborhood, for the next two or three weeks," said an officer.

Their bivouac occupied the summit of a very high hill, from which they could watch the campfires around them. There was a dense clump of low trees which gave them good shelter from observation. It was completely surrounded by cultivated fields, making it impossible for any one to approach them unobserved. The pike road ran in

sight for quite a distance. They were within hearing of drum-beat and bugle-call of three camps. The horses were tethered and fed, and they proceeded to make themselves comfortable for the day, sleeping by reliefs. Each one's waking hours were spent in studying the surrounding country.

The night had scarcely set in before our scouts were mounted and were soon dashing to the left. During the night they beat around two large camps, and by daybreak were safely back at their camp of the previous day. Very early the next morning, during Doctor Jack's watch, he espied a mule straying around, and found himself taking quite an interest in the old fellow. He took an old gunny sack and raveled enough to make a bridle, which he placed on the mule, and hitched him. When the Doctor's watch was over, Frost was awakened to take his place.

"Say, Frost, if you will swap trousers with me for a while, I believe I will ride that old mule into that nearest camp, and see what I can pick up."

The exchange was made. Frost's trousers were at least two inches too short for the Doctor. He had taken out his shoe laces, and had replaced them with some grass strings from the old sack, and he had wound himself a suspender out of the same material. With a little red clay he soiled his face, neck, and hands, and dishevelling his hair, produced a make-up in which Uncle Lot would not have known him. The remainder of the sack was used in place of a saddle. Mounting the mule he rode away, making for the nearest camp; but avoiding all

farm-houses, for fear that his balaam might be recognized. He rode boldly up to the camp.

"Halt," sang out the guard, "who goes there?"

"Me," said the Doctor, the embodiment of innocence.

"'Me' won't go here. Give the countersign," bringing his gun down on the Doctor.

"Hold up that musket, Mister; I doesn't know nuthin' erbout yer soldier ways—so I don't know how ter answer yer, as yer want to be answered back; but I's er huntin' my old blind steer, what's strayed erway frum home."

"Well, my man, you can go back, your steer is not here. If he had been, in all likelihood he would have been turned into beef long before this."

"Youns would er had ter had yer teeth sharpened 'fore yer could er eat him, he'd er bin so tar-nation tough."

The officer of the day happened to be passing, and observed the man.

"Where do you live, my good man?" he asked.

"Over yander on Mud Run, Mister, an' I wuz er tellin' this gentlemun with the musket, that I wuz er huntin' my old blind steer, ter see if he'd been hereabouts."

"Have there been any rebels in your neighborhood lately?"

"Naw, sir; there hain't."

"How does it happen that a great, strong, strapping fellow like you are not in the army? You look as if you might make a good soldier."

"Naw, I ain't—I ain't no strappin' feller er tall; an' I ain't as strong as I looks. I don't want ter be

no solger no ways. I never could endure the very sight of blood, it allurs makes me sick at my stomic. Onct I stuck er sliver inter my foot, an' when they pulled it out, it went ter bleedin' like thunder, an' I fainted dead away; an' it took 'em two days an' nights ter bring me so's I wuz knowinst ter anything. Dad always did say that I wuzn't fit fer er solger."

When he changed a large plug of tobacco from one pocket to another, he became a very interesting personage to the boys in blue, who soon surrounded him, and amused themselves at his expense—especially the tobacco.

One who had drawn most liberally on his tobacco invited him to take dinner with him,—doubtless having an eye to the remainder of the tobacco,—an invitation that the Doctor was not slow to accept. It not only supplied him with a dinner, but also the opportunity of gathering information; in neither case did he fail to avail himself of all that was going on. While not appearing to do so, he kept eyes and ears wide open. He found that a large reserve force was being massed. General Hooker had about one hundred and twenty-five thousand men—this was the 15th of April—and they were nearly ready to move. Having accomplished his mission, the next thing was to get safely out. He was aware that he was being watched closely, but he managed not to give any evidence of that knowledge.

"My old 'oman will be after blowin' me up ef I don't git thet blarsted old blin' steer up 'fore night; an' when she do begin ter blow me up, she never

knows when ter stop; but thet's whut I got fur marryin' er red-headed 'oman. 'They's handy er-bout the house, but they ain't gwine ter stan' no foolishness er tall. Yer'v got ter stan' up ter the rack, fodder er no fodder, I tell's yer."

"It looks to me," said one soldier, "as if she had been ducking your head in a hog-waller."

Now that remark was coming too close home for the Doctor's comfort.

"Honest, now!" he said, "youuns hain't eat our steer up in beef has yer? Then I must hunt 'im up. Cain't I bring youuns some chicken an' aigs an' some honey?"

"Yes," answered a half dozen voices at once.

"It'll take me er day er two ter git 'em up fur yer. Good-by, gentlemun," and he started his mule down the road, to look for his old blind steer. In speaking of it afterward, the Doctor said that he never knew a mule to walk as slow as that one did; it was as though he never would get out of gun-shot of that camp. Nor did he feel at all comfortable until he was back in their camp and got his hand on his revolver again. Such a thing as a dash on that old mule was not to be thought of under any circumstances. If it had come to a run, the Doctor would have abandoned the mule and taken to his heels.

Captain Evans was in no very pleasant mood when he awakened and found that Doctor De Mar had gone into the enemy's camp. He felt sure that he would be suspected and arrested. He was just considering the advisability of changing their camp, as the Doctor's capture would expose the fact that

other spies might be in the neighborhood, when he saw the Doctor returning.

When Doctor De Mar reported his news, which was fully confirmatory of their observations, Captain Evans decided that they had better hurry back within their own lines as speedily as possible. The next night was spent in beating around General Hooker's right flank. Just before dawn they arrived at their old camp on the top of the high hill, where they had the view of the highway. They were near their own lines now, and with the feeling of success were in fine spirits. They had decided after feeding their horses they would make a daylight ride of it.

Just before they were ready to make the start, they saw a carryall driven on the highway with a lonely horseman leading the way. At first nothing was thought of it; but they saw them stop and the horseman turn back, while the carryall proceeded. This excited Captain Evans's curiosity, and he said,

"Doctor, you have the most direct information for General Lee; take Frost, and hurry back with all the speed possible. Sligh and I will investigate this carryall business. We may overtake you; if not, do not wait for us."

Doctor De Mar and Frost mounted their horses, and rode down the hill, taking the road toward Richmond. They had to pass within a few hundred yards of the party that had interested Captain Evans.

CHAPTER XLIV

Captain Evans and Sligh soon overhauled the carryall and stopped them.

"You are going right into the Yankee camp; it is just ahead of you."

"Yes?" said the young man, "then we had best stop. We are very much obliged to you; good-morning."

"Well, er," stammered Captain Evans; he saw that there was a lady in the case. Like most brave men, the Captain was afraid of women. Had it been only a man, he would have fired the questions at him without any sugar-coating. From their manner, he was sure that they were aware of their proximity to the enemy's lines. He said,

"Excuse me, have you a pass, or permit to enter the enemy's lines?"

"No, we did not know that it was necessary," said the young man.

"It is," said the Captain.

"We are strangers in this neighborhood," said the lady. "I believe that women do not count in war, and this young man is an invalid."

"Beg your pardon, Madam; but ladies do count very often. The most dangerous spies we have to contend with are ladies—of course, do not understand me as intimating that you are a spy, though that ought not to be considered a disgrace in my sight, for I am one myself, on occasion. If you cannot satisfy me as to your identity, I shall have to ask you to come back with me; and as I am not on

speaking terms with the party over there, we will not linger too long in their vicinity."

While he spoke in rather a light vein, there was that in his eye and manner that convinced them that he was meaning every word he said. Mrs. De Mar knew that they were safer where they were, so near the Union lines; that every moment's delay there made the chances of a surprise and their deliverance better. But unfortunately for them, their interlocutor was an old soldier, besides being an expert scout and spy, and knew the danger there was in remaining a moment longer than was necessary where they were.

"Please, Madam, I have important business at General Lee's headquarters and no time to lose. Young man, you will turn your team and follow me as rapidly as possible."

This he did with the best grace he could command, though not urging the mules any more than he could help, and keep up the appearance of doing so. More than once the Captain admonished them to hurry up the team. When they came to the Confederate out-post, the Captain stopped the carryall and went forward, and having convinced the officer in charge of his identity, he explained what he knew of his convoy, at the same time saying that he could not waste any time, as he had important information for General Lee. The officer was requested to send a man with the captives to Colonel Jones's headquarters—being the nearest to that point.

"I wish," said Lieutenant Caddy, the officer in charge of the post, "that you had arrived a little earlier. Colonel McGympsey has just passed, go-

ing in that direction; he could have escorted them. You know him, do you not, Captain? He has a son, Colonel McGympsey."

"Yes, I know him. It would have been all right; but those mules are so slow, they would not catch up with anything faster than their own shadows. I must leave them with you."

Lieutenant Caddy ordered the carriage forward, and saluting the lady said,

"You will have to go to Colonel Jones's headquarters for examination. Hendly, you will take charge of them. I can ill afford to spare you, we are so short of men, but hurry back as quickly as possible."

Thus guarded they moved on, cowed and thoroughly disheartened; all their plans had failed. How miserable they felt—how harrowing their thoughts were, beggars description—we will not attempt it. They had not gone more than a mile, when they came to a spring by the roadside, where they saw no less a person than their old friend Colonel McGympsey, his horse grazing near by, and himself partaking of a lunch. In a way, this was embarrassing to the fugitives. Under no consideration would they compromise their old friend, who had been so kind to them, and had stood by them so loyally, besides risking so much in order to assist them. Remembering his fertile brain in any emergency, they wisely left him to take the initiative, if it were to be made at all.

When they drove up and stopped, the Colonel gave no sign of recognition; in fact, he glanced at them with the most perfect indifference, as though

he had never seen or heard of them before. Hendly, the guard, had heard the conversation that had passed between Captain Evans and Lieutenant Caddy.

"Good-morning, Colonel McGympsey, I am glad to have caught up with you. We have some prisoners here that are to go to Colonel Jones's headquarters. If you had not left so soon, they would have asked you to take charge of them as you are going that way. That being the case, and we are so short of men on the post, would you be so kind as to take charge of them, and let me return? I am sure they will give you no trouble."

The Colonel hesitated, as if he did not care to play guard duty.

"Suppose I might do something to earn my rations while I am in camp with the boys."

He approached the carryall, and bowing to the lady said,

"Circumstances make it my painful duty to carry you to Colonel Jones's headquarters for his examination into your case."

The cavalcade moved forward. As soon as they were out of sight of the soldier, the Colonel reined in his horse close beside the conveyance.

"This certainly is hard luck; I thought that you were safe."

"It is too bad—too bad!" exclaimed Mrs. De Mar, with difficulty restraining her tears; "but I do not see how even you could have prevented it, if you had been with us," and she recounted the circumstances of their arrest and return.

"No," said he, "I could not have prevented your arrest if I had been there. I may be able to help you now, though the way is not clear to me."

"How thankful we are that we have fallen into your hands again!" she said. "Though for the world we would not compromise you in any way. If it comes to that, you must let us take our chances."

"We will have to await developments," said the Colonel. "Something may turn up to help us."

"Our good, true friend! we see nothing but failure and misery. So much, so much depends upon our getting through," and her voice choked at the expression, while her tears could no longer be restrained.

"There is nothing to do now, but go back. Having received you at the officer's hands as prisoners, I am forced to take you to headquarters. After you have been examined we will see what can be done. You can understand that not having any passport, found entering the enemy's territory, and unwilling to disclose your identity, makes a bad-looking case to men at the front, who are naturally suspicious. We can decide nothing beforehand, only this: I am your friend, who has promised to help you—and that much you can depend upon, come what may," and the old gentleman straightened himself up, as though the determination was swelling up within himself.

"Colonel, how can we accept so much at your hands—so much trouble—so much risk? Yet with so much at stake—not only for myself, Colonel, but

for the sake of others—how can I refuse your aid? It is so hard to know always what one's duty is."

"That is very true, Madam—and when one knows, sometimes the doing is difficult. If we can't do it, then it is not a duty. I think I see mine, and God helping me—I'll do it!" and he rode forward, whether to cut short the conversation, or to hide his emotion, who can tell? He could not have told himself.

Reaching headquarters, Colonel McGympsey gave his parole for them until such time as Colonel Jones could give them a hearing. When the time came, the Colonel could not decide exactly what to do. These people were evidently attempting to pass through the enemy's lines without a permit. Their baggage was thoroughly examined, but disclosed nothing of a suspicious character. While Colonel Jones was hesitating, Colonel McGympsey stepped forward and said,

"Excuse me, Colonel, I had some talk with these people as we came. I cannot believe that they intend any harm to the country or cause. This is evidently a lady," and he turned and bowed to her. "It might be as well, as a precaution, to deprive them of their team and send them back to Carolina."

"Thank you; I am disposed to accept your advice, if we could have any assurance that they would go there."

"For that matter," said the old Colonel, "I am going home and will undertake to see that your orders are carried out strictly."

"If you will undertake to see that they go through

Carolina, say as far as Augusta, Georgia, I will impress their team and release them."

The fact that Colonel Jones was seen to ride Colonel McGympsey's fine dapple gray after that would cause an over-suspicious person to think that possibly Colonel McGympsey had "seen" Colonel Jones. Besides, it was wonderful to note with what nonchalance the Colonel coolly advised the impressment of his own fine pair of mules. Ah, the old gallant—the gentleman—the knight!

Transportation was furnished by way of Richmond, Petersburg, Weldon, Wilmington, and Columbia to Augusta, Georgia. An orderly was sent with them to Bristol station, to bring the team back; and they were safely launched on their way. On the way to Richmond, the Colonel's mind was as busy as were the wheels trundling beneath him.

What should they do? To Augusta, they must go—he had given his word to that. To attempt to go through Virginia again was not to be thought of—he was not sufficiently familiar with the west to attempt that course. He could have no excuse for going in that direction himself. In the last expedition he had been going to Virginia to see his son, who was in the army. That had often passed him unchallenged, and his convoy passed as part of the party. He could think of no excuse for going west. The more he thought, the more confused he became.

During the stop at Wilmington for dinner, the Colonel heard some men speaking about a blockade-runner that was to go out from that port that night, if it was dark enough. There was an idea, and he

seized it. But—he had given his word that he would carry his convoy safely to Augusta, and that word must stand; so he said nothing; but he did a deal of thinking. According to orders and his promise, he delivered the fugitives at Augusta. They took rooms at the Planter's Hotel. And the burning question was—what next? A council was held the next morning in a private parlor. It was a rather dispirited party that met there. Mrs. De Mar was sitting near a window looking out on the busy street, although it was doubtful if anything passing there made any impression on her mind, which was too busy with her own personal affairs. Her companion, reclining in a large easy chair near her side, toyed nervously with a small map which he held, and which he had evidently been consulting. The Colonel, with his hands crossed behind him, was striding back and forth at the other end of the room, looking more than ever like an understudy of George Washington. He was deep in thought. Mrs. De Mar was the first to break the silence.

"Colonel," she said, "we have taxed your kindness already beyond all reasonable limits. We can never say how grateful we are for your uniform kindness—for the sacrifices you have made on our account. I feel that we ought not to ask you to trouble yourself to advise us further."

The Colonel paused in his walk; and for the first time since we have known him, did deliberately an impolite thing. He stopped in front of a long mirror, and stood looking at himself, while he addressed his conversation to a lady. I haven't the

slightest idea that he was conscious of what he was doing. I am inclined to the notion that he was drawing inspiration from looking at his strong, burly person, in this hour of uncertainty. Mentally, he must have been asking himself, "McGympsey, are you balked?"

"Madam, are you still determined to reach your friends at the North?"

"Yes, Colonel, *we must do that.*"

"Then, you *must* run the blockade to Nassau," said he.

"Is that possible?" the young man asked.

"Why not?" asked the Colonel. "Others do; and if you are willing, Madam, to make the trial, I will go down to Charleston, and look around and find out what can be done."

"We will attempt anything that you would suggest, Colonel. We have every confidence in—"

The Colonel would hear no more. He rushed from the room and was off on the first train bound for Charleston. Arriving there, he scarcely knew how to proceed. He took up his quarters at the Charleston Hotel. He later sauntered down Meeting street to Broad, at the corner where stands old Saint Michaels, whose noted chimes were ringing out the hour. While he listened to their music—if he knew, he did not recall their strange history. Five times had they crossed the Atlantic, either as chimes or cannon—in both forms, they had served God and country well. Cold indeed must be the heart that, knowing this, is not quickly and deeply touched by this memory and by their sweet, pathetic notes. The Colonel paused to listen and ob-

serve the hour; but his mind was too busy, and his heart too full with his friends' pressing need, however the sentiment might have moved him at another time. Turning down Broad street, he came to Bay, where he saw long strings of drays, laden with bales of cotton. He knew what that meant, and followed to where they were being discharged into a long, narrow, little steamer, the *Ruby*. He loafed around for some time, but every one was too busy to stop to talk with him. There was even wanting that crowd who are so fond of watching other men work. At last he saw a black, slick darky leaning against his load of cotton, waiting for his turn to unload. The Colonel approached him and said,

"That is a snug little boat," pointing to the *Ruby*.

"Yaas, sah, dat she are—an' she's pretty peart, too—ain't none uv them fellers out dere kin come anyways near 'er w'en she gits ter goin' good."

"She is so narrow, I shouldn't think she could carry many bales of cotton."

"No, sah, she cain't tote more'n two hundred an' fifty bales ter onct. Dey had ter make 'er narrer, so she could git betweenst de blockaders out at de bar; dey's so thick out dar."

"When will she go out?" asked the Colonel.

"Ef dey gits 'er loaded in time, an' it's er dark night, she'll go ter-night. Ef not, she'll go ter-morrer night, shore. She don't care nuffin' erbout tides an' t'ings; she kin run up a spring branch if dey pushes 'er too clost."

"I suppose any one can go on her that wants to," asked the Colonel.

"Not esac'ly, boss. Yer has ter hev er pass, an' yer got ter hev er lot of gold—'Federate money don't go."

"Where do you get them?" asked the Colonel.

"Well, boss, yer gits de pass frum Giner'l Ripley—an' yer got ter git yer gold where yer kin. Yer pays Marse John Frazer fur yer tickets. Boss, won't yer give me er chaw uv terbaccy, please?"

The Colonel complied with the darky's request and moved on.

While the Colonel had not learned much that he did not know before, yet, as he said, he familiarized himself with the subject, which made it easier for him to think and talk about it. He knew that he must be cautious as to what he said, and to whom—no precaution was to be neglected.

He strolled about the streets, taking in the sights, but keeping his eyes open for some one he knew. A passage on the *Ruby* was out of the question, if she was to sail that or even the next night. After supper he was sitting in the rotunda, smoking, and watching the throng come and go. He saw a rather swell set of officers come in, dressed in full uniform—there was to be a grand ball or something of that kind. The Colonel did not recognize any of them, until there was a familiar voice, which caught his ear, when he recognized an old acquaintance—Captain Kempis, who, in fact, was the son of his old employer of years ago. He was loath to interrupt him then; but under the circumstances he felt that he could not stand on ceremony, so he addressed him.

"How do you do, Captain?" said he.

"Why, hello, McGympsey, I am glad to see you. Where did you come from—drop down out of the clouds?" and he was introduced as the Captain's particular friend, as he said, "to the whole shooting-match."

At the first opportunity he asked the Captain when he would be at leisure, as he wanted to see him particularly.

"Will it keep until to-morrow, Mac? If not, say so, and I will make it convenient now."

"To-morrow will do, thanks."

"Here is my card—you can find the place. Come around about one o'clock and have lunch with me, and we can talk it over at our leisure."

"Thank you again; good-night," and he bowed himself out.

He went directly to his room, and shook hands with himself on his good luck. Of all the world he would have selected this whole-hearted young man—quick, clear-headed, loyal to his friends, and fond of excitement—to help him out in a case like this. The Colonel felt that the battle was half-won. What he and Captain Kempis could not do, when they put their heads together, was not worth the doing; but—he did not forget the proverbial "slip."

He slept very little that night, oscillating between the most sanguine hopes of success and maddening fears of failure. When he would recall the many hare-brained escapades of young Kempis, on the plantation as a boy,—no colt or horse was ever too wild or too vicious for him to ride or drive—always ready for any break-neck prank—and how he always came out on top, as he expressed it,—his hopes of

success would rise many degrees. Then again, when he was forced to remember how near they had been to success, when they were stopped and turned back, all his fine hopes would take wing, leaving him floundering in the "Slough of Despond."

The first thing in the morning, after having had his breakfast, the Colonel hunted up Captain Kempis's address given him the previous evening. He did not propose losing any time. Having found it, which he did without any trouble, he fixed certain landmarks in his memory. This off his mind, he amused himself looking around at the old historic city-by-the-sea. He enjoyed the occupation, notwithstanding the "Swamp Angel" was dropping shells now and then into the very heart of it, from a distance of four miles—in that day a wonderful feat in gunnery.

CHAPTER XLV

Punctually at the appointed hour, Colonel McGympsey presented himself at Captain Kempis's quarters, and was ushered into the presence of his host, who received him with a warm welcome, in the kindest manner possible. Immediately after the usual greetings, the Colonel wanted to plunge at once into the matter in hand, but the Captain would not hear of it.

"Wait until we have had our lunch; then we will be entirely alone. You know if you want to ask a favor of a man, never approach the subject until he has had his dinner. I know that you have some favor to ask of me, and I am so anxious to oblige you, I think you had better wait until I am full, and in love with all the world."

So they chatted on indifferent subjects until the luncheon had been served and discussed, after which the table was cleared and the decanter and cigars were produced, and the servants dismissed.

"Now, fill your glass, Colonel, and after you have 'warmed the cockles of your heart' we will be ready to talk business."

"You must excuse me for the present, Captain,—not now—not now."

"You—not drink anything! Well! I was sure that the object of your visit to the city was to ascertain where the best whiskey was to be obtained, and relying on my judgment in such matters, you had come to me for advice. No? Then I am all at sea.

I will help you if I can—further I must not promise. You are right sure that it is not the whiskey?”

“Stop your guying; you know that I would enjoy a good time, with the best of you—but, not now—not now. If I can carry through this matter in which I am engaged, I expect to stay drunk a week straight.”

“It must be a very serious thing if it is keeping you sober for any length of time. Got an idea of making a fortune running the ‘Block?’ There is lots of money in it, if you have the right kind of craft and the right kind of skipper. She must have speed, easily handled, light of draft, lying low in the water, and a hard-coal burner. See? I am up on anything going. Whiskey is not my only forte.”

“You have come nearer the mark than you may think for, in your jest.”

“Is that so? I shall set myself up as a mind-reader.”

“Steady down, Captain, and let’s get to business,” said the Colonel.

“All right, but give me one chance to see if I can not read your mind. Close your eyes and think right hard about the matter in hand—just one minute.”

“Well, here goes,” said the Colonel, and he shut his eyes tight.

“There, that will do. You are mixed up with some woman running away from her husband. There! did I not read it right? Be honest.”

“Come, Captain, stop your jesting. I don’t want to run the blockade, but I have two friends who do;

and I'll tell you 'square,' one of them is a woman. Now, can you help me?"

"There will be no trouble about the man—that is, if he is not liable to conscription, or can make the authorities believe that he is not, which amounts to the same thing. As for the woman, that is another affair. I am not dead sure; but my impression is that they will not take ladies—the thing is too risky. But it is only a short run over, and if she is bent on going she might disguise herself as a man, for that matter."

"I don't know about that; I have not known her long; but in that short time I have had pretty fair opportunities of judging. If she isn't all right then McGympsey is no judge. She is determined to go through to her home—she is a Northern woman—she makes no effort to disguise that fact; but as for the man, she is not so open, and he is as mum as a clam. I have asked her no questions. I found a lady in distress and I have undertaken to help her through, or sink the ship. I have not been able to consult any one until I met you—I know that I can depend upon you."

Then followed a detailed account of their trip in Virginia, their arrest, and return. When the Colonel had finished his narrative, the Captain grasped his hand and said,

"Mac, you are a trump—a whole team—in fact, the whole thing—a man from the soles of your feet to the crown of your head. From your account I agree with you that they are not up to any mischief—as far as the Confederacy is concerned. I admire your pluck and gallantry, as well as your

delicacy. Here is my hand, I am with you soul and body. I will do everything in my power to help you. If it is not all right, and there should have to be any hanging, I'll hang right by your side."

"Shake!" said the Colonel as he grasped the Captain's hand. "I wish I could go out on the street, and shy my hat up into the air, and say a little Latin to these people."

"That would not do down here, Colonel. As I was saying, I do not know about their taking ladies on the blockade-runners. To make any inquiries might make it embarrassing if she decided to go under a disguise. I am sorry that she is not here, so that we might consult with her on that point. The *Margaret and Jesse* came in last night. It will in all probability be a week before she gets out. She is fast, but there is lots of her out of the water, and old Captain Wilson, her skipper, will wait for a dark night. That will give you ample time to have her come down, or for you to run up to Augusta and interview her on the subject. We must make no mistake this time—not that I mean that you made a mistake before, only that I have joined teams with you, and we are going to succeed this time, if we have to steal a blockade-runner and take the lady out ourselves."

"I suspect that it would be best for her to remain in Augusta until everything is arranged. She is avoiding publicity as much as possible. I will run up there to-night and will return to-morrow."

"In the mean time, I will sound a friend of mine, who is on General Ripley's staff, and who will do

anything for me. To catch the five o'clock train you will have no time to lose."

The Colonel took the hint and—as he was wont to express it—was off like a jug handle. On the following morning he presented himself to his friends in Augusta, and laid the whole case before them. If the lady would be willing to disguise herself in male attire, the Colonel felt that there would be but little trouble in their going through all right.

"Oh, the misery of it all!" she exclaimed, so hardly pressed was she. "I must go through at whatever cost. What do you advise, our dear friend? I am sure that you would not advise anything improper."

"This is the best arrangement that we can make," said he, "and I would advise you to attempt it; we can but fail."

"I must go—I must go—there is so much at stake! How long is the voyage, Colonel?"

"About thirty-six hours at most, I think."

"We will go. When can we start?"

"You understand, that we have not perfected anything. The arrangements are to be made yet, if they can be made at all. It was necessary to consult you before doing anything. The *Margarct and Jesse* is in port now, and will sail some time during the week."

"Then we will remain here, and make all necessary arrangements as far as I am concerned, and be ready at a moment's notice to come to Charleston."

"I think you are correct about it; if you were on the ground there might be danger of troublesome questions being asked. If it could be arranged for

you to arrive just before the sailing of the ship, it would be better. We will do the best we can," said the Colonel.

"I could not question that, after all your kindness. I have every confidence in your judgment, and as for the goodness of your heart, I can but believe that you have few peers," and tears of gratitude began to show in her lovely eyes.

"You very much overrate what little service I may have been able to render you. You see, I have just been put upon my mettle; I undertook to do a certain thing, and I never like the idea of failing; that is all there is to it," and he hastened to change the subject by saying,

"I don't think there is any train that would put you in Charleston in the afternoon early enough for the steamer, which I am told drops down the bay about five o'clock."

"Unless an extra train were procured," she said. "I have not said to you before, Colonel, that no reasonable expense need stand in the way."

"I fear that an extra train to catch a blockade-runner might and would be very apt to excite some comment. I think the best plan would be for you to take a night train from here, arriving at six o'clock in the morning, drive directly to an appointed place, and remain there quietly until the hour for going aboard."

And so it was arranged, and the Colonel went back that night. At an early hour the next morning he hunted up Captain Kempis, who was on the lookout for him, and who had entered into the plot with quite as much heart as the Colonel himself,

though probably from a very different standpoint. The Colonel had been actuated by a spirit of chivalric gallantry, almost quixotic, while, on the other hand, Captain Kempis enjoyed the fun and excitement, the novelty of the situation and all that; besides, he had a real friendship for the Colonel, and was glad to do him a kindness. Doubtless there was a dash of the Colonel's feeling and sentiment prompting him also. He came from the same section of the country—a section where womanhood was respected as probably nowhere else in the world. From whatever cause, he had worked up an enthusiasm surpassed only by that of his friend the Colonel.

He had lost no time. He had made arrangements for permits for Henry T. James and George Bloomfield—two invalids—to take a voyage to Nassau and return, with the view of improving their health—with a surgeon's certificate attached. Everything was complete and in due form—except the descriptive lists, which the Captain did not attempt. Everything else, names, ages, and all had been evolved from his own brain. So far the whole had worked satisfactorily.

“But,” said the Captain, “it has cost a pretty penny, getting just what you want, and just as you want it—blanks and all. I had gone in to win; and if the parties are not able to foot the bill, we will do it ourselves; wasn't that right, Mac?”

“Perfectly, my dear friend. I could not have done better myself; and as for the expense, that is all right; neither of us will be out anything.”

Together they looked over the papers critically to

assure themselves that it was all regular. The papers were found satisfactory. The next day the Colonel went to Augusta to report progress, and to congratulate his friends upon the bright prospects of their getting away. They had been equally busy. The lady had supplied herself with a suit of male attire, had cut off her long hair, and had provided herself with dye for her face and hands.

"I have been studying up on blockade-running, Colonel," said the lady. "After we are once outside the blockaders, there would be no necessity for my keeping up my disguise; they could not put me off nor take me back."

"While what you say about being put off or sent back is true, sometimes they are forced to put back themselves. After making a start, they may find something wrong with the machinery, or the weather may become unpropitious—scores of things might happen—and they would have to return to port. In that event, if you had thrown off your disguise, you would not be allowed to proceed. I would take no chances possible to avoid."

"I had not thought of anything of that kind. I fear yet that we will get lost on the Atlantic without your guiding hand. We have come to look to you to think for us."

"That is all a notion, Madam; you will be free then to think calmly for yourselves," and as usual when the conversation took this turn, he made an excuse to get away from it. Now he said good-by, and was gone back to Charleston.

During the few days they had to wait, she wore her new clothes around their rooms to get accus-

tomed to them. Often she wound up with a hearty cry.

While waiting for the day of sailing of the *Margaret and Jesse*, we will go back to old Uncle Lot, who has troubles of his own.

CHAPTER XLVI

If it were possible to set forth plainly the mutual good feeling, the real attachment, and, under certain circumstances, the comradeship, that existed between master and slave, it would be almost incredible, even to the average Southern youth of to-day, and most certainly so to any Northern brother of any age. So, without asking any one to believe one word of it, I make the statement simply as a fact—knowing whereof I speak.

Prior to the war the negroes as a mass were loyal and true. During the war they were more than loyal, if that were possible; and the Southern people could do no more just, noble, and generous act than to erect a suitable monument to the old-time slave, who during that conflict worked the plantation and cared for the family of his master during his absence. If there was one rebellious act on their part, history has failed to record it. No man who lived through that long and terrible struggle can ever forget their faithfulness; nor should he be unwilling to show his appreciation of it. In a way, it has been proved by the old master remaining the negro's best friend—in thousands of instances helping him on his feet by material and moral aid. While impoverished by the outcome of the war, he has taxed himself heavily to aid them in securing something of an education. The negro has never had a better friend—he will never have one so good. On the other hand, he has had no more cruel enemy than the man—be he black or white—who has tried to

stir up bad blood between the two races in the South, and who has endeavored to instill ideas of social equality into his mind. No self-respecting person would want to thrust himself into company where he is not wanted, let him be ever so conscious of his fitness.

While on this subject, there is one more statement that should be made: There is not a thinking person in the South who would wish to have the negro back in slavery, nevertheless—*American slavery was the greatest blessing that had ever been vouchsafed to the negro race.* As a result of it millions of them are enjoying civilization. Without it, not a corporal's guard of them but would be living on snakes and toads, and worshipping the good Lord only knows what—if anything at all.

As we have seen, Uncle Lot overtook his Missus just as she and her companion were arrested. Then he was in a quandary what to do. He had come up with them so suddenly and so unexpectedly that it disconcerted him. If he went forward and let her see him, she would ask, "Lot, what are you doing here? Your place is at home, taking care of the plantation." What reply could he make—"I am here looking for you"? That would never do.

He had seen his Missus and her companion rescued from the excited mob by a drunken man and carried off to his home. He hung around until he saw them safely housed. Then he began to seek a mount for himself, well aware that his journey was only begun. Whether he went back or forward, he would need the mount. He succeeded in getting a

fairly good mule, and was ready to follow when the journey was resumed.

Day after day did the faithful darky hover around his Missus, determined never again to lose track of her. Frequently he went into their camp at dusk, and sold them chickens and eggs; each time assuming a different disguise. His visits were to serve a treble purpose—to furnish his Missus with such necessities as he was able to procure for her; to learn, if possible, their destination; and, what was scarcely of less importance in his mind, to learn who this companion was. On one occasion he had heard endearing words between them, when they were not aware of his proximity. He heard her say,

“We are not so far from Richmond now. I have great faith in Colonel McGympsey getting us through. If nothing happens to prevent, within the next few days—a week at the most—we will be within our lines. Then it will be only a matter of two or three days when we will be safe at dear old Hazelhurst.”

There was further conversation, in which he heard his master's name mentioned, but he did not catch what it was. The old darky wondered what her feelings were toward his master. He could not conceive how any one could know him and not love him. He knew that his master idolized her, and always treated her like a queen. He was one of those all too rare men who are always kindest to those of their own household; therefore, Lot had every reason for knowing that she had every wish gratified—and now to have run off with this

stranger was entirely beyond his comprehension. At times he felt that he should die of the mortification and shame of it all.

"I's mighty sorry," soliloquized Lot, "ter hear 'em er cooin' ter each odder; but I's got er inklin' where dey's goin'; dat's some recompensation fur list'nin'. I knows dat it is mighty bad manners ter eaves-drap, an' in ginerel I'd scorn ter do it; but dese is war times—an' I done it fur Marse Jack. Uhuh, dey's gwine ter Hazelhurst. I must'n fergit dat name—Hazelhurst—Hazelhurst. Well, w'en t'ings is all straight, Marse Jack is as sabillious as any gintleman; but he ain't gwine ter stan' no foolishness w'en he 'sponsibility's at stake—I tells yer fur shore. Dis bizniss we's ingaged in may be all right—an' dis nigger prays every minit in de day dat it mought be, but—" and there the old darky stopped short—even in his own mind, he was unwilling to question the actions of "Marse Jack's wife." He was playing the spy upon her actions, it was true; but always with a certain amount of mental reservation: he was doing his duty as he saw it—at the same time he felt most keenly that it was a shabby trick.

On he jogged, day after day—watching and listening, but keeping out of sight, except on such occasions when he was able to assume some new disguise—then he would make some excuse to go and be near his Missus. As we will remember, he had taken one of his wife's dresses to use for this purpose; but when he had put it on he felt so awkward in it he had heretofore discarded it. On a Sunday they had stopped to rest and Lot had spent the

better part of the afternoon trying to get himself up in Aunt Winny's dress and bandanna head-handkerchief. The shadows had lengthened themselves until they were reaching into the dusk before he could determine to try this new disguise. When he had mustered up sufficient courage, he went mincing and switching up to the camp—as he had seen some dusky maidens doing—and made the regulation “curtsy” all round. All hands were taking part in the preparation of the evening meal. It was a day off, and the tension was somewhat lessened.

“Good-evening, Auntie, we are glad to see you,” said the lady, “we are glad to see you. Possibly you can aid us; how do you make a Welsh rarebit, or will you make one for us?”

“Why, honey chile,” trying to ape an old mammy, “I doesn't know nothin' erbout Wilch rabbits; but, honey, our cotton-tail rabbits ain't *made* er tall, they jes'—er—er—grows down in de brier patches,—dere ain't nobody kin *mek* 'em.”

“Well, Auntie, as the Welsh rarebit is out of the question, will you not make us an omelet?”

“W'at's dat yer wants me ter make, honey?”

“An omelet. You can make a plain omelet, can you not?”

“Certainly, honey, if er plain one'll do, I kin mek er rale plain one. I didn't think er plain one would suit yer complexion 'zac'ly.”

From the preparations that were going on, he rather supposed that an omelet was something to eat, though he “wuzzn't plum shore.”

“You are making fun of us, Auntie. We are very green cooks—we acknowledge the fact; but come

and make us an omelet. We have taken the day to rest, and we thought that we would like something extra. I know that you can make us a plain omelet."

"Cert'nly, honey, ef er plain one'll do. Lemme wash my han's good an' clean fuss." He had noticed that his wife always washed her hands before cooking, and therefore he knew that he was safe that far. He washed and he rinsed his hands again and again, to gain time to think whatever an omelet could be. In washing and rinsing his hands, he wasted all the water there was in camp, and he made that an excuse to go to the spring to replenish the supply. For one time since he had left home, he wished himself back there, if for nothing else than that he might ask Winny what an omelet was and how it was made.

When he was well out of sight he stopped and placed the bucket down on the ground, and gazing into it long and intently, mused, "Omelet—omelet—what is er omelet? Bucket, 'pears ter me dat my haid is as empty as yer is. Omelet—mus' be made outen onions; but I didn't smell no onions, an' I's got er keen nose fur onions. Ef dey ain't got no onions, dey cain't mek it outen dem. I'll tell 'em I cain't mek it ef dey ain't got no onions." Then he laughed a nervous, senseless kind of a laugh.

"I got er great notion ter cut dirt an' take ter my heels. Ef dis ole bucket wuz back yonder full uv water, I'd run fur it shore. But I cain't leave 'em widout no water, arfter I was'ed all dey had."

He took the bucket on to the spring, and after filling and emptying it several times, to gain time, he

returned to the camp. An idea had come to him as he went.

"Now, honey, ef you'll git de things raidy w'ile I washes my han's good an' clean, hit'll save lots uv time; I's in sorter uv er hurry dis evenin'." Now he would see what the omelet was to be made of, and he smiled at the aptness of his ruse.

"Here are the eggs; what else do you need, Auntie?" said the lady.

The perspiration had gathered in big drops on Lot's face, and in his excitement he had taken the bandanna from his head to wipe his face.

"Auntie, haven't I seen you before? Your face looks familiar to me," and she drew near and looked at him intently.

"Lawzy, honey, if yer's ever been erbout old Mister Dimwoody's place over yonder, yer mought er seen me dere." Lot's mind was humming like a buzz-saw now. He began feeling for his pockets where his pockets ought to have been.

"Honey, I's leff my spectacles. I'll run an' see ef I can fine 'em; I cain't mek dat omelet widout 'em."

He did not mince his steps as he hurried away; and when he was beyond observation, he broke into a run. His speed was hampered by the skirts to which he was unaccustomed.

"Dis pesky ole frock's got me inter dis trouble anyhow. I allers heard dat nine-tenths uv men's troubles come frum women folks' botheration, an' I believes it. I'll burn de ole thing dis blessed night!"—and he did.

They had passed Richmond, giving it a rather wide berth. Nearing Gordonsville, Lot went in that

direction to try and learn something of his master's whereabouts. By dint of persistent questioning and hard riding, he found Doctor Green's quarters, and there learned that his master had gone home. This was a sad disappointment to the old darky. From the day that he found that they were going near the army, the hope had been cherished that he would be able to find his master and place himself under his instructions. He knew that his Missus was going into the enemy's lines if she was not stopped; and he thought that his master was the only one that had any right to interfere. He lost as little time as possible in getting back on the trail. In making the detour in search of his master, he had just covered the time in which their arrest had been made, and they had been turned back—an occurrence of which Lot, of course, knew nothing. So it happened that he deliberately rode into the Union lines, only to find that his Missus had not arrived. The old darky decided at once to retrace his steps in search of her. His dismay when informed that he could do nothing of the kind, is a subject for the imagination.

CHAPTER XLVII

"You can't go back, old man; you are a prisoner of war," said an officer.

"Er pris'ner uv war!" exclaimed Lot. "I ain't er fighting' no war, boss."

"You needn't call me your boss. If you can give a satisfactory account of yourself, there need be no more bosses for you. If you were not so old, we would give you a gun and let you fight for your race. As it is, as I have said to you, if you can give a satisfactory account of yourself you will be permitted to go North, and be a free man."

"Yaas, sah," said Lot, "I won't call yer boss, ef yer don't want me ter. I don't want no gun—nor I don't want ter do no fightin'—no more does I want ter be free; I jes' wants ter fine my Missus. Ef she hain't gone on, I don't want to go nuther. Ef yer please, sah, I would like ter go back an' hunt 'er."

"Well, you see we don't do business in that way over here. You are a prisoner of war until you have given a satisfactory account of yourself. You will have to be taken over to the provost marshal's office for examination. Here, guard, take this prisoner over to Major Sansfield, and tell him that this man came into the lines of his own accord; further than that, he must tell his own story."

Lot was marched off in short order, and in no pleasant frame of mind. Arriving at the provost's office, he told that official that he was "jes' huntin' his Missus," adding,

"My Missus is er Northern lady, an' is er tryin'

ter git ter 'er own people up in New Yawk; an' I wuz er tryin' ter go wid 'er, but I got sipperated frum her jes' befo' we got inter de lines. W'en I miss' her, I t'ought dat she had come on in, but somehow she ain't come yit. If yer will let me, I'll go fotch 'er in."

"Well, old man, that sounds like a plausible story; but plausible stories are just the ones that require most careful investigation. We will wait until to-morrow and see if your 'Missus' comes to hand. Guard, lock this man up until to-morrow morning."

On the following morning Lot was carried back to the provost's office, where he was informed that his "Missus" had not arrived nor had they heard anything of her.

"Shore, boss, she wuz er comin'; somethin' mus' er happen' ter her."

"What is your 'Missus's' name?" asked the officer.

This was unforeseen, and Lot had to take time to think, and that time cost Lot no little trouble. He was not sure that his Missus was traveling under her true name; and if she should give a different name, it might make trouble for her when she presented herself. Besides, he supposed that everybody on both sides of the line knew his master's name, and that he was fighting on the Confederate side; that fact might compromise matters.

"Then, what is your name?" asked the officer sharply, "seeing that you do not know your 'Missus's' name."

For similar reasons, this, too, was embarrassing, which being obvious to the provost, he lost patience

with the old dorky, and fired the following questions at him with confusing rapidity:

"Where did you leave your Mistress?"

"Erbout ten miles back, boss," Lot answered promptly.

"Why did you leave her?"

Here was another poser. Lot felt sure that it would not do to tell the exact truth; and as he had always prided himself upon his reputation for truthfulness, he hesitated again. This was fatal. The officer lost all patience with him, deciding that all was not straight.

"Corporal, take this man to the pen and lock him up."

Lot was locked up in the pen with the other prisoners of war, where he was unmercifully chafed by them—as a "runaway nigger."

He went as far off to himself as it was possible for him to get, and there sat down and cried like a child. He felt that he had done the best he could for his master; and now he was cooped up like a rat. He did not complain of the jeering; for he knew that appearances were against him. It was the forced inaction, when he knew he ought to be following his Missus, wherever she might be going. He expected to be taken back the next morning to the provost's office; but days passed and no attention was paid to him, further than to issue him his rations. His case began to look hopeless, and he was drifting as nearly into a state of apathy as it was possible for him to do under the circumstances, until the thought began to haunt him that his Missus might pass through the lines without his

knowledge. When this thought had mastered him, he aroused himself and went near the gate and waited for a guard to pass. He waited long,—it could not be said patiently,—and when the first one passed, Lot hailed him, and in most pathetic tones begged him to let him know when his Missus came. The guard laughed but said nothing. So it went on day after day. On one occasion, one of the white prisoners noticing Lot's persistent loitering around the gate, went up and accosted him:

"Say, old coon, do you want to get out?"

"Shore, young boss, I does. I's almos' dyin' ter git out."

"Well, if it will be any consolation for you to know it, there are others; so you need not feel lonesome. When you get out, drop us a postal card and let us know how it was done."

Lot took the guying with as good grace as he could, and laughed as near a laugh as it was possible for him to do then. The thought that these young masters could not get him out was not very reassuring; but Lot was not of the giving-up kind.

At times he grew desperate. He knew that his Missus had either passed through the lines, or had been arrested and taken back; possibly she might have gone through at some other point. In any event, he must get out of this prison. Finally, he decided to tunnel out. He moved his tent as near the dead-line as was permissible. Being the only negro confined there, he had a tent to himself. He would lie around and sleep during the day and dig at night. He burrowed down in the center of his tent, covering up the aperture during the day.

There was an unused well near, into which he could dump the dirt from his tunnel. When he deemed that he had gone far enough to clear the line, he began digging upward until near the surface, and he could hear the footsteps above him. Then he stopped and waited until the next night, as it was now late and he was tired. On the following night, which was quite dark and favored his escape, he heard the guard mount pass by; then he got his belongings together and descended into the tunnel. Getting to the end, he listened until everything was quiet—not a sound was to be heard. He began digging upward through the thin crust above him. He soon felt the cool air rushing down. He would soon be free to prosecute his search for his Missus, and his heart swelled with gratitude at the thought. As the last strata was broken, it fell into his face and eyes. He straightened himself up—rubbing his eyes. The first thing that he saw was a stalwart sentinel with his gun pointing at his head.

“Der jeeminy, boss!” exclaimed Lot, “I like ter run over yer.”

“Not exactly run over me, you know, my good man. Put these bracelets on. I have been waiting for you for the last two nights.” Click-click, and the old darky was handcuffed for the first time in his life.

“Tain’t no use ter put dese t’ings on me, boss. I’ll go anywhere’s yer want me ter.”

“That is all right—move on. People that try to escape can’t expect to enjoy our perfect confidence, you know. You will go into the sweat-box for this,

where you will have ample time to think up a better way of escape next time."

Without further ado, he was marched off to the sweat-box, as it was fitly called—a rude box affair, four by six feet. When the key turned in the lock poor old Lot broke down completely; all hope died out of his breast. He could see no prospect of his ever getting out of this trouble. If he had committed any crime for which he was being punished, it would have been altogether different. As it was, he was trying to do all the good possible to those who had a right to his services, and who trusted him.

"The darkest hour precedes the dawn" is an old saying as *passé* as it is hope-inspiring. On the following morning, Lot was marched up to headquarters and given a hearing. He made a clean breast of the whole matter, save that he told nothing that would be compromising to his Missus. He felt that he could not worst matters.

His story was so well told, and with an exhibition of such genuine feeling, that every heart was touched; and every heart was in sympathy with him, difficult as it was for them to realize the old slave's attachment and loyalty to his master's family, who held him in bondage. But his Mistress had not put in an appearance to corroborate his statements—which circumstance was very much against him.

The prisoners in camp—there were several—were to be sent that day to a Northern prison. One of the officers proposed that if Lot would give his parole of honor not to try to escape, he would take him as his servant. That, of course, was preferable

to staying in prison; nevertheless, this arrangement would confine him all the same.

"I'd like ter obleege yer, boss, but I mus' fine my Missus."

"Why, I thought that I was 'obleeging' you, old man," said the officer.

"Then, I t'anks yer, boss," said Lot. "I's shore my Missus is gone some odder way; an' I mus' go as fur in dat direction as I kin."

So it came about that Lot, heartbroken and dispirited, was marched off with the other prisoners, who continued to guy him rather severely, as a run-away, free nigger, and of course had very little sympathy for him. Knowing that they did not understand, he took it all good-naturedly—it was foreign to him to be impertinent.

After this, we will let Uncle Lot tell his own story, in his own way and time.

CHAPTER XLVIII

All was bustle on the wharf. The *Margaret and Jesse* was to sail to-night if it should prove a dark one. Cotton bales were being crammed into every available nook and corner. When the holds were filled to the hatches, the decks were filled. Hard coal was stored in the bunkers. Every one interested kept scanning the skies. There were all kinds of weather prognostications. The optimists said that it would be so dark that you would not be able to see your hand before your face; the pessimists said that the clouds were sure to blow away, and there would be a bright night.

Colonel McGympsey had telegraphed the night before to Augusta, and the morning had brought a couple of young men down to the city. Both were plainly but neatly dressed. One, the smaller of the two, wore a long great overcoat, extending down to his boots, and a soft felt hat. They were met at the depot and driven to Captain Kempis's rooms, where lunch had been prepared for them. After the refreshments, and the servants had retired, the blanks in the permits were filled in, in a very matter-of-fact way, and with very straight faces all round.

"Let's see," said Captain Kempis, "this is Mr. James's certificate. Your height, Mr. James?"

"Say, five feet six."

"Color of hair?"

"Brown."

"Color of eyes?"

"You will have to decide that, as it has always

been an open question," and he turned a pair of lustrous eyes, brown as a bun, in the Captain's direction for just one instant, then let them sink to the floor.

"Hazel brown, beyond question," said the Captain, and his heart felt the warmer for that glance of those witching eyes, shaded by long black lashes, themselves as soft as silk.

"Weight?" suggested the Captain.

"One hundred and thirty-eight," and the young man blushed like a maiden to the roots of his short, curly hair.

In like manner, Mr. Bloomfield's certificate was filled in. Everything now was regular and all right, and Colonel McGympsey congratulated them on their success.

"So far," suggested Mr. James.

"Yes," said the Colonel, "we thought once before that all was right; so we will not holler before we are out of the woods this time. You will have one advantage over the other passengers, if you are captured off the bar, you would only get home the sooner."

"The next thing to do is to get the passage tickets," said the Captain.

"Will it be necessary for us to go out to get them?" asked Mr. James.

"I am very well known at Frazer's," said Captain Kempis. "I think I can arrange it."

"We will be very glad if you will do so for us. We do not care to appear in public any more than may be actually necessary. We have taxed you

gentlemen so much. You have placed us under such a debt of gratitude, that we are bankrupt anyway."

"Please do not speak of trouble, Madam,—ah,—I mean, sir. It has given Colonel McGympsey and myself only a pleasure, breaking the monotony of hearing old 'long Tom' bark, and the screeching of his shells. They, of course, have a different music for Northern ears."

Rising quickly from his chair, Mr. James stepped across the room, and taking a hand of each, said,

"While I am a Northern woman"—forgetting for the nonce her disguise—"my sympathies are with the South. My residence in it has been most pleasant. I came with all the prejudices of an uncompromising Abolitionist; I have long since had my views modified. While there are things that I would gladly change, if I could do so without injury to others, I love—and ever shall—this lovely Southland. Everything that I hold most dear is within its borders. If my life here had been different, the treatment that I have received at the hands of you gentlemen—a chivalry undreamed of—would have won my heart. I pray that we may live to meet under more favorable auspices, and that I and mine may have the opportunity of showing our appreciation of your kindness to a woman in distress. And I wish to add, that should the fortunes of war throw either of you gentlemen within Northern lines, that you will add to the debt of gratitude I already owe by letting me know if there is aught that I could do to add to your comfort or relief. I would risk my life to serve you. This will be my address." She sat down at a table and wrote, "Mrs. Jack De

Mar, Hazellhurst, N. Y.” Her face was aflame when she handed it to Colonel McGympsey. Overwhelmed with gratitude, she had forgotten everything else. Both of the men started when they saw the address. Both of them knew the De Mars well, some of them personally—all of them by reputation. By a mutual, gentlemanly instinct, they did not make the fact known. They had seen that she had been momentarily thrown off her guard by her emotions, and had unwittingly disclosed her identity. The chiming of a mantel-clock reminded them that time was passing, and Captain Kempis took advantage of it to get out of an awkward moment.

“I must secure your tickets soon,” he suggested.

“What will the amount be?” asked Mr. James.

“Eighty dollars each, in gold.”

“You will find the money in this purse,” as she handed one to Captain Kempis, “and besides I will ask you gentlemen to reimburse yourselves for all the expense you may have incurred in our behalf.”

Captain Kempis took the purse, which was a heavy one. He had intended going alone to procure the tickets, leaving Colonel McGympsey with the company, but having this amount of money given him, he changed his mind.

“Colonel, you must go with me. You,” turning to the others, “will excuse us for leaving you alone for a short time while here.”

“Certainly—most certainly,” they both answered quickly, in fact with such alacrity that the Captain gathered the idea that they really preferred it. Bowing themselves out of the room, they were soon wending their way down King street, arm in arm.

As soon as they were well out of the house, they stopped and looked at each other in the face for a moment, when Colonel McGympsey said,

"Tom, don't this beat the devil and bobtail?"

"Don't speak so loud, Jim. The idea! And this is Jack De Mar's wife! I'll swear I don't understand it. Jack can't know anything of this. He is a splendid fellow—a perfect gentleman. I would not for the world do him an unkindness." They walked on slowly for a block or two, when they crossed down into Meeting street to the Charleston Hotel, where they stopped again.

"Mac, I'll swear this will not do," taking out his watch. "Would we have time to wire him?"

"No," said Colonel McGympsey, "there is not time for that; and if there was, I ain't going to give that woman away. She is as bright as a steel trap, and knows what she is doing; and all the devils in hell could not make me believe that she is doing the wrong thing. I can't see through it—this young man with her don't look like a villain to me. They do seem very much wrapped up in each other; and while I have not seen anything like spooning between them, yet they do seem very much attached to each other. I never dreamed until just now who she was. I knew that she was a lady of refinement and education. I flatter myself that I know something of Latin and Greek, but they both know more about it than I can ever hope to know. They are not common people, I can tell you. I have promised to help them through and I am going to do it."

"But, Mac, Doctor De Mar can not know anything of this; and as friends of his family, how

could we ever face him if we should ever meet him after this? Supposing that it is not all right?"

"By Gaul, it is all right!" exclaimed the Colonel. "It can't be anything but all right, I tell you. That lady is as straight as a shingle; and I'll shoot any man who says she is not," and he brought his fist down into the palm of the other hand, with a report like a pistol shot.

"Come, come, Mac; don't be so demonstrative about it; you are attracting notice. I have no doubt that she is all right; I just simply can't understand why she is slipping away with this young man, leaving home and husband, going off in disguise in this way."

"Look here, Kempis, we have always been friends, but you are doing just what I said no man should do, and I ain't going to put up with it from you nor any other man, do you hear?"

"Oh, bother your ranting, you good-hearted, hot-headed old beau! I am not saying anything against the woman."

"Lady, if you please; don't call her a woman."

"Well, well, old fellow, the *lady* then," as he laughingly pulled off his hat and bowed. "I hope all is right?"

"Haven't I told you over and over, that *it* is all right?"

"Yes, Mac. Don't make a fool of yourself. I am going to help you get them off, as I promised you that I would; but then you know it is all so out of the ordinary run of things, one is obliged to be taken by surprise."

"Well, yes," said the Colonel, "it does look

strange—that's a fact; but come on, and let's get them off." Very little was said by either one of them as they made their way down to the wharf and up into John Frazer & Co.'s office. There every one was busy, and they had to wait quite a while before their turn came. Colonel McGympsey was especially restless. He could not keep his seat. Every few moments he would rise and walk to the window and look down at the *Margaret and Jesse* at the wharf; then up at the skies; then back to his seat again by Captain Kempis, to whom he would whisper, "It will be dark as pitch to-night."

When their time came, Captain Kempis stepped up to the clerk and told him he wanted to pay the passage money for two passengers on the *Margaret and Jesse*.

"Have you permits from General Ripley?"

"Yes, here they are," and he handed them to him. He scanned them and saw that the signatures were all right. If he had read the descriptive list, he would have seen that they did not correspond with the two men before him; but in his hurry he did not do so, thus saving any explanations. The tickets were handed over to them, and the money paid.

"Is there any doubt about the steamer sailing to-night?" asked the Colonel?

The clerk, who in the mean time had become engaged in something else, answered him shortly,

"That will depend upon the weather and half a dozen other things. We set no time for sailing. Be on hand at five o'clock sharp."

The Colonel felt that he ought to say something, and in the absence of anything better, said, "Thank

you," and they walked away. If possible he was more nervous than before. While they could not see how anything could turn up to interfere with their plans, yet there was the fact that they were so nearly accomplished, and if nothing else, there was the uncertainty when the *Margaret and Jesse* would sail.

They walked down to the steamer to look her over, but they were met at the gang-plank with the information that they could not go aboard. They contented themselves, per force, in walking along the wharf, looking at the vessel from that standpoint.

Time had slipped by more rapidly than they had been aware of; it was now half-past three o'clock. The Colonel and the Captain strolled back to the latter's apartments. Preparations were begun for the start. Colonel McGympsey was impatient to be off immediately; but Captain Kempis advised waiting until the last moment. A carriage stood at the door in readiness. The entire party was in a highly wrought up, nervous condition. No one could possibly tell what might happen at any moment—or from any quarter—to mar their well-laid plans. The tension was too great for conversation.

The little clock on the mantel noted a quarter to five. The four left the room and entered the carriage without uttering a word, and were driven away. Just as the carriage was turning from Broad into Bay street, an orderly dashed up and stopped them.

"An order for Captain Kempis," he said, saluting.

It was as though every heart stood still. Fifteen minutes more and they would have been gone.

Every face was so blanched that a Sherlock Holmes would have arrested the entire party on the spot, on the evidence of their faces.

"That is all right," said Captain Kempis, as he took the order. "Move on, driver."

The orderly had ridden away and the carriage was proceeding. All eyes and attention were fixed upon the order, when Captain Kempis deliberately thrust it into his pocket, and to their inquiring looks answered,

"How can I tell what the order contains? It must keep for half an hour at least."

"Where else," said Mrs. De Mar, extending a hand to each, "could we have found two such chivalrous friends?"

The carriage drove up and stopped, just as the men stood by to draw in the gang-plank. Hasty farewells were said, while expressions of gratitude and equally honest protests were exchanged, as Mr. Henry T. James and Mr. George Bloomfield were hurried aboard. The hawsers were thrown off, and the tug carried the steamer out to her mid-stream anchorage.

"That order," suggested Colonel McGympsey, "you have not read it."

"Never disturb a sleeping lion," was Captain Kempis's sententious reply.

The first hour on the *Margaret and Jesse* was spent by the passengers—there were eight in all—in being assigned to their respective berths. There were no staterooms—only one cabin, in which were stored passengers and their baggage; every available space having been given to "King Cotton." A

five-dollar gold piece to the steward secured for the fugitives two corner berths, with a curtain cutting them off from the other part of the cabin.

Colonel McGympsey and Captain Kempis stood on the wharf as darkness settled down on the scene. By keeping the direction, they could still see the outlines of the steamer. As it grew darker and darker, they strained their eyes to watch its movements. Sometimes they thought that they could see her—then again they were not sure; nevertheless, they kept up the watch. They became quite nervous because she did not move off. Could there be some trouble to detain her? Certainly it was time for the start. The longer they waited, the more restless they became. They had been expecting every moment to hear the move; still everything was perfectly quiet. An hour—an exceedingly anxious hour—was passed in this way, waiting and listening. Surely something was wrong. Another half hour had glided by and no sign of starting.

A rocket shot up out at the bar; then another and another, in rapid succession. Then came over the bay the sound of heavy guns.

"There!" exclaimed the Colonel. "There is some trouble out at the bar. Old Captain Wilson must have suspected something of the kind, and that is the reason that he had not attempted to go out."

"That is the *Margaret and Jesse* out among the blockaders now. They have discovered her and are giving chase," said a bystander.

"Thunderation!" yelled the Colonel. "That can't be so; we have not heard her turn a wheel yet."

"You old cracker, you!" said Captain Kempis, "do you suppose they go out with a flourish of horns and ringing of bells? They slip out like a cat after a rat."

They hurried up to Frazer's office, where they found everybody watching, with intense anxiety, the maneuvers at the bar. It meant thousands and thousands in gold to them—it meant more than that to Colonel McGympsey!

"The *Margaret and Jesse* has been sighted and is being chased—that is all that we know," was the response they had to their inquiries. They had to content themselves with that. Fainter and fainter grew the flare of the rockets, and less and less distinct were the reports of the great guns' dull thuds at sea. Within an hour, both were lost to sight and sound.

"If she is captured," said the chief clerk, "we will see her in the morning, lying under the guns of the blockaders. If she is not there, then we feel assured that she is clear."

Colonel McGympsey refused the Captain's invitation to drink that night.

"No, I thank you, I will wait until morning; once before I thought they were safely off, when they were not, and needed my assistance. If there is nothing to be seen of the *Margaret and Jesse* in the morning—then!"

As the night wore away, the clouds blew off, and the morning dawned clear and bright. Nothing was to be seen at the bar—save the blockaders at their stations. By nine o'clock the pilot who had

carried the *Margaret and Jesse* out came back to the city, with the news that she had gone out under their noses, safe and sound, after having been chased twenty-five miles to sea.

CHAPTER XLIX

Immediately after the *Margaret and Jesse* had dropped anchor in mid-stream, dinner was served. As has been stated, the passengers numbered six besides our adventurers. Before dark the berths were assigned, and every arrangement made for the night—no lights would be allowed on board; not even a cigar. As soon as the night had drawn its dark curtain against all prying eyes, the anchor was raised and the *Margaret and Jesse* dropped quietly down the harbor, coming to a standstill off Fort Sumter. A small boat came alongside and communicated with Captain Wilson. Whatever the message was, it seemed to be satisfactory, for the patent wheels of the steamer began to revolve, though the motion of the boat was scarcely perceptible. A heavy head of steam had been raised—hard coal was burned in these blockade-runners to avoid making sparks. Everything was in utter darkness—a hood being placed over the binnacle to shut off all light, except on the compass, so that the man at the wheel could see to steer. The rise and fall of the little steamer showed that they were getting out to sea. Then the paddle wheels stopped their revolutions and the steamer slowed up, while the pilot went over the side of the boat, down into darkness. The passengers strained their eyes to see what would become of him; not one of them could tell. Directly from down in the black sea came,

“All right, farewell.”

“Farewell; port,” said Captain Wilson. A little

bell down in the bowels of the steamer jingled, and the wheels began to turn. They were off.

One had to experience the intense excitement of blockade-running to have the slightest conception of what it was. Out on the broad Atlantic—in utter darkness—surrounded by a hostile fleet of the most powerful men-of-war known in those days; their guns shotted for your undoing—alert, crouching like so many lions, ready to spring upon you at a moment's notice; the men about you speaking in undertones, and those tones vibrant with apprehension. Notwithstanding all this, there was an exhilaration that thrilled every nerve and sent the blood tingling along the veins. There was that boyish grit that said, "Catch me if you can,"—for while you stood at the rail, with hands clenched, with teeth firmly set, and with eyes intently peering into the darkness to catch sight of them, as though you would spring upon them, you knew that at last your victory depended upon your heels, and you said, "Catch me if you can. Blast you, catch me if you can!" Could *any* pen describe it? I doubt it! I doubt it! In battle, you are face to face with your foe; you are armed as well as he; you can strike back blow for blow. Here, you may perchance have a penknife in your pocket, skipping along on the tips of the big waves, in a defenseless little cockle-shell of a boat; with a thousand sharp, quick-witted "blue coats" ready to pounce down on you. If you never experienced it, I fear that you will have to go out of this world never dreaming of what blockade-running was in those days.

The *Margaret and Jesse* was in the midst of them.

She knew they were there, though she could not see one of them. With increasing speed she was stealing out to sea. Directly the order came from the bridge, "Hard a port." "Hard a port it is," came the answer from the man at the wheel. The little bell down below jingled again; and in a few moments the *Margaret and Jesse* was flying over the waves in the darkness. The passengers began to feel that surely they were through the blockaders. A vain delusion! Suddenly a huge blockader rose up in view, dead ahead and apparently not more than two hundred yards away. What a moment that was! At what instant might a broadside sweep them from the face of the waters? The passengers instinctively crouched down behind the rail; but as they glanced over their shoulders, they saw the old captain standing staunch on the bridge, and the walking-beams rocking up and down—how could a shell miss either of them?

"Hard a starboard!" shouted Captain Wilson. The wheel spun around and the man behind it cried out, "Hard a starboard it is, sir."

The report of a small arm rang out from the deck of the man-of-war. In the next instant up shot a rocket, followed by another and another in rapid succession, from half a dozen blockaders, all around the *Margaret and Jesse*. Jingle, jingle, rang the little bell. Being under full headway the little blockade-runner had the advantage. There was no such thing in those days as search lights on war vessels, and therefore the firing was pretty much at random. The shell flew hot and fast, at first falling

far in advance; then as the *Margaret and Jesse* changed her course, they went wide afield. For an hour the chase was kept up; after that the pursuers were lost sight of.

The sense of relief from danger came gradually; and when it was decided that they were safe from further pursuit, the passengers went below. The more innocent ones congratulated themselves that all danger, save that common to the sea, was over; so they gave thanks and slept the sleep of babes.

Between midnight and one o'clock a bright light in the cabin awakened the lighter sleepers, who sprang from their berths with the idea that they had been captured while they slept, knowing that lights were not allowed on any account. Their fears were soon put to rest by seeing the captain and one of the passengers standing in the middle of the cabin with a bright light. The captain hastened to inform them that they had not been captured; but that a bag of gold was missing. For the moment the relief was great. On inquiry it was ascertained that Messrs. John Frazer & Co. had put a bag containing several thousand dollars in gold in the hands of a Mr. Keepitheimer, for transmission to their correspondent at Nassau, notwithstanding their own confidential clerk was on board, the explanation being that as Mr. Keepitheimer was a British subject, if they were captured his money would not be taken away from him. If the confidential clerk had been sent along to keep an eye on Mr. Keepitheimer, he was a monumental failure. The money had disappeared. Mr. Keepitheimer claimed that he had placed this bag of gold on the pile of trunks in the

middle of the cabin when he retired, which had been simultaneous with the other passengers. The passengers being strangers to each other, there was nothing else to do but to examine every one's berth and baggage. Beginning with the captain's trunk, all were examined until they came to that of a lad from Georgia. He had not turned out, notwithstanding all the hubbub that had been made. It was apparent to all that he was "possuming." The captain called to him several times, and at last shook him, when he was forced to appear to awaken; and when told what was wanted, he simply turned over and said that he did not have the money. At this the old captain lost patience with him, and, reaching down, seized him and dragged him out on the floor. He still insisted that he did not have the money, and that it was not necessary to open his trunk. The captain was now in a towering rage. Every one now believed that the boy had the gold, though on account of his age they were exceedingly sorry for him.

"I will give you one minute in which to produce your keys and open that trunk, before I break it open," roared the captain.

"Well," said the lad, with a comical expression on his face, "if nothing else will do you, here are my keys." The smile broadened on his face as he watched the old captain tug at his trunk to pull it out. The trunk was a large one, and so heavy that one man could not lift it. The bystanders knew not what to think. If he had the gold, he was acting like an idiot; if he did not have it, why should he have objected to having it examined? In the mean

time, the captain had succeeded in getting it out and open. On top was one solitary shirt spread out; beneath it was packed full of fine tobacco—nothing else. Every one, except Captain Wilson and Mr. Keepitheimer, laughed heartily, the lad joining in. This so incensed the captain that he told the boy that he would have him arrested for smuggling. That, however, closed the incident. The money was never found—by its owners.

Fortunately, the first morning out dawned clear as a bell. One of the great dangers to blockade-runners was to have a fog suddenly lift and find themselves in close proximity to a cruiser. Those making their first trip naturally supposed that they were safe after eluding the blockaders at the port of exit; such, however, was not the case. Cruisers were scouring the sea in all directions; and “Hole-in-the-wall” near Nassau was guarded as were Charleston, Wilmington, Mobile, or any other port.

Those who were not sea-sick enjoyed their breakfast. Mr. James was reported indisposed, and had his (?) meals served in the cabin. After dark that evening he (?) and Mr. Bloomfield were sitting on deck. Everything was dark, except such light as the southern stars gave forth. During the day Mr. Bloomfield had made the acquaintance of Mr. Palmers, a wealthy Englishman, who had not only traveled everywhere, but had lived almost everywhere. He was a man of intelligence, and of fine conversational powers, and, withal, fond of talking—making him a delightful companion.

Mr. Palmers, in sauntering around, came upon Mr. Bloomfield and his companion, as they sat at the

rail watching the porpoises play back and forth under the steamer, giving off myriads of phosphorescent sparks as they sped through the water. Mr. Bloomfield soon succeeded in drawing him out for the entertainment of his companion. When asked which was the most desirable part of the world for a young man to settle in, he replied,

"Wherever you are—let that be where it may—*be content*, and you are in the garden spot of the earth; there is no better place." Mr. Bloomfield, being disposed to question his statement, he was drawn into a fuller account of his own wanderings.

"There is a compensation in every place under the sun; it only depends upon what one prizes above everything else," he said. "Wealth, health, society, solitude, heat or cold, all have their devotees. Each may have its advantages: each will have its disadvantages. A case in point: I had always heard such glowing accounts of the Island of Madeira—a perfect climate, good government, healthy. There seemed nothing wanting to make it as near an approach to a paradise on earth as it were possible. Through all the years, I had been wishing for a paradise; here was one to my hand."

"I have often wanted to go there," said Mr. James unwittingly. Mr. Palmers started at the tone of voice—a voice so soft, low and melodious.

"I beg your pardon," said he, pretending not to have understood the remark.

But Mr. James was not to be trapped again—he (?), too, pretended not to hear.

"Well," continued Mr. Palmers, "having heard these glowing accounts from so many different

sources that I considered reliable, I determined to go there and spend the remainder of my days. Having arranged my affairs, I bade farewell to England forever, and went straight to the island of Madeira. I found it all that had been represented—and more. I found the good government, the good society, the health, the delightful climate, the choicest of fruits and vegetables—ay—ay—and I found—fleas, fleas, fleas, fleas! I was assured that I would in time become accustomed to them; but within six months the fleas routed me—horse, foot, and dragoons. You will find, my young friends, as I have said, there is a compensation in every place; just as there is no place that has no drawbacks.

“After beating around the world, I have spent a year or two in Charleston; and pleasant years they have been. I had intended to remain there permanently—and now those hot-headed fellows—God bless them!—have kicked up such a row around my head, that I have had to get out; and here I am on the go again, when I ought to be dozing away the remainder of my days about the big columns of the Charleston Hotel, or sauntering among the flower gardens, or down on the Battery on moonlit nights.”

There was a tone of sadness in his last words that touched the sympathy of his hearers. They all three sat silent for some time, studying the bright stars above them, each busy with his own thoughts; but the thread of Mr. Palmer's story was woven into the warp of their thinking.

CHAPTER L

"Have you heard the story of our skipper?" asked Mr. Palmers.

"No," answered Mr. Bloomfield: "will you tell it to us?"

"If the story be true, and there is scarcely any room for doubt, he is not exactly the safest man in the world to run the blockade with."

"He appears to be quite competent," said Mr. Bloomfield.

"There is not the slightest doubt on that score; he well understands his business; and he will go through if any man can; but that is just where the trouble might come in—he can't afford to fail. You see, it was in this way, as I have been told: He took the first blockade-runner out of Charleston. He was captured, and a prize crew was put aboard of his ship, and it turned toward New York.

"Now, very handsome salaries are paid the captains of these boats; and besides, a man with Captain Wilson's determination is not disposed to submit to defeat with the very best grace. Under these circumstances it was natural that he should be greatly chagrined at this mishap. Personally, he had nothing to fear, further than some temporary inconvenience, as he was a British subject; but his pride was touched, and he would lose a considerable sum of money. It is possible that he was part owner in the boat; be that as it may, his John Bull courage was fully aroused; and he determined that he would not submit to such a fate without a final effort

to mend matters. He made himself as agreeable as possible to the lieutenant who had been placed in command of his boat. He gave no sign of his discontent. They played cards together, and were soon on the best of terms. He discussed what course he would pursue when he should arrive in New York. However, he told his own mate that he was not going to New York.

"How are you going to help yourself?" asked the mate.

"We can seize the vessel, and turn her back to Nassau," said the captain.

"Impossible!" said the mate. "Besides, if it were possible, it would be piracy."

"What's the difference? Aren't we outlaws anyway? If we land her in Nassau, we will be all right."

"There is a very wide difference in running the blockade and piracy, Captain. I am sorry that I cannot help you; but I can not lend myself to any such extreme measure as that. That was not "nominated in the bond."

"The hot-headed captain lost his temper, which seems an easy thing for him to do, and in very emphatic terms informed his mate that he was going to make the effort.

"I have made up my mind not to go to New York, or to lose my ship if I can help it; and if I am balked by any interference on your part, I will send you below first," pointing down. "You know me." The mate is said to have been no coward, but as the captain remarked, he knew the man he had to deal with. He said,

"Bluster is uncalled for, Captain Wilson; it is

out of place, and wasted on me. While I do not approve of your venture, you ought to know that I would not interfere in anything that you might undertake yourself, that did not endanger my life unnecessarily.' A sailor coming within earshot, the conversation was changed, and was not alluded to again.

"Captain Wilson appeared in unusually good spirits during the morning. At noon he assisted in taking the reckonings. After lunch he scanned the horizon. There was not a sail in sight. He proposed a game of cards with the lieutenant, jocosely proposing the ship as stakes. The banter was laughingly accepted, and they descended below. At the head of the stairway, Captain Wilson stood aside, saying,

" 'Beauty before age this time, for luck.' The lieutenant in a playful humor ran down the stairs, closely followed by the captain, who closed the door and turned the key, the click of which caught the lieutenant's ear. He turned quickly to find a navy pistol pointing in his face, and murder in the captain's eye.

" 'Breathe a word, and I will blow your brains out on the spot; keep quiet, and not a hair of your head shall be hurt. Put your hands behind you, and turn around—so'; and in the twinkling of an eye, his hands were bound. A gag was forced in his mouth, and he was thrown down and rolled under a berth.

"The captain now went to the top of the stairs, and, calling the second officer in command, told him that the lieutenant wished to see him for a mo-

ment below. Not suspecting anything wrong, he did as he was requested, the captain following him closely, when the scene of the last few minutes was re-enacted. Having the officers in his power, Captain Wilson leisurely walked up on deck, and, mustering the crew, told them what he had done.

"'Now, I am master of this ship one more time. I am not going to New York, but propose to turn around and go to Nassau. If you will obey my orders, you will be well paid for your services as soon as we reach land; and you will be at liberty to go whither you wish. But,' roared he, 'if there is a single man that is not willing to accept my proposition, let him step one pace in front of the line—and I'll blow his brains out. The men saw that he was prepared to execute his threat, and the determination in his eye. There was no parleying—as one man they yielded. Turning to his mate he said,

"'Your course?'

"'Here is my hand.'

"'Then go below, and you will find a pair of navies in the desk at the right. Arm yourself, and come on deck.'

"The vessel was turned for Nassau, under a full head of steam. Fortune favored them, and they saw not a sail until they reached 'Hole-in-the-wall.' Neither the captain nor his mate closed his eyes until they had delivered the boat and her cargo of cotton to the consignee—a little late, it is true.

"Captain Wilson was as good as his word. The men were well paid—beyond their most sanguine expectations. To the lieutenant and his mate the old captain offered his apologies, which were not ac-

cepted very graciously, as might have been expected; though they disclaimed any animosity.

"So you understand," continued Mr. Palmers, "that if Captain Wilson were captured, the United States Government would hang him for piracy. It is pretty generally believed that he would blow up his ship before he would surrender."

"I see, I see!" exclaimed Mr. Bloomfield. "He might not be the safest skipper in case of a capture."

Just at this juncture one of the stokers came lounging by. A common danger is a great leveler. He walked up to our little party and remarked,

"We are bowling along bravely so far."

"What do you mean by—so far?" asked Mr. Palmers. "Aren't the prospects fair for a successful voyage?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose so," the stoker drawled, "but a smoke was in sight off our starboard just at dark; you know there is never any telling what might happen in blockade-running. Then the captain is so anxious to make 'Hole-in-the-wall' early in the morning, he is having every pound of steam possible crowded on; and these old boilers are not safe by a long shot. They should have been overhauled months ago," and off he marched.

"A new danger," said Mr. James.

Mr. Palmers had been waiting patiently for an opportunity to draw this silent young gentleman, whose voice had attracted his attention earlier in the evening, into the conversation.

"Is this your first voyage?" Mr. Palmers asked him.

"Yes."

"What are your impressions, on finding yourself hundreds of miles from land, on a crazy old ship, and under a reckless skipper?" he asked.

"Initiations, I believe, are rarely pleasant," was the laconic reply.

He was unable to get anything but monosyllabic replies to any remark directed in that quarter. There was something in the tone of voice and in its reticence that excited his curiosity; however, he was too much of a gentleman to force a confidence. Turning to Mr. Bloomfield, he said,

"I can not recall a voyage where some one has not tried to make timid passengers uncomfortable by hinting at some danger. You need not be apprehensive of any danger from defective boilers. There is too much at stake in blockade-running for practical men to send out a steamer with machinery that would be liable to get out of order at a critical moment. That fellow is simply talking to hear himself talk. The only danger for us now is a dense fog early in the morning, when we might awaken in close proximity to a cruiser. Having passed 'Hole-in-the-wall' in the morning, we will land safely in Nassau before ten o'clock. As we had but little sleep last night, I think we had best retire. I will bid you good-night."

Having had the experienced traveler's assurance, our novices felt more comfortable. His words of encouragement, while given to both, were undoubtedly intended more especially for him (?) of the tender voice.

"That voice!" soliloquized Mr. Palmers, as he descended to the cabin. "Peculiar. Very reticent.

Soft and low. Hardly a boy's voice. 'There is something. A study?' Between his waking and sleeping, there were dodging in and out, men with female voices and women with male voices, until tired nature asserted herself and whispered, "Be still!"

The morning dawned clear and uncomfortably warm. Heavy clothing was discarded; and Mr. James found his long great-coat, that had served him so well thus far, insupportable. In consequence, he remained below all the morning, looking out through a port-hole. Mr. Bloomfield oscillated between the deck and the cabin. About nine o'clock he rushed down and informed his companion that they were safe in British waters.

Safe! Safe! Safe! She looked up through the skylight, and thanked God. Safe! They embraced and kissed each other, while tears streamed down their cheeks. Safe!

If only we could have wished them God-speed! Ah, the wheat and the tares! The right and the wrong! So, ever it is, the world over.

CHAPTER LI

You will remember that we stated before that no one, as far as we could learn, knew where Little Miss Tippers came from. She never referred to any other home than this, nor to any other life than the one she was living among us. Whether there was something in her former life—there could have been nothing of herself—which she did not care to recall and associate with her present surroundings, or whether it was of her constitutional reticence, was more than any one knew or could guess. Evidently she had been well brought up; her instincts were always of the best; her kind good-heartedness was universal, confined to no class or condition; she never tired of doing good to her fellow-beings—even the humblest enjoying her readiest sympathy and help. Under all circumstances—at all times—“she did what she could.”

Only yesterday, she had been unusually hard worked. Those for whom she had been caring had been exacting, ungrateful, and fault-finding, when she had done her best for them. She had but little sleep for several nights. With the sick woman, the two sick children and the dotaged grandmother to nurse and care for, hands, head, and heart had been kept busy. She had done so much for these people, and people like them, all through the passing years, that they had come to feel they had a claim upon her services—that she was simply doing her duty. This evening her limbs ached; her head was bad. This

laborious life was beginning to tell upon her strength. Her friends had over and over again persuaded her to give it up, offering to send her traveling for a change, and as the easiest way of quitting the work; but there was always some immediate demand to be met that she must do first. And so it had been deferred, and deferred again until now.

When her pony phaeton arrived at her little cot yesterday evening, night was fast setting in. It was dusk—a brooding hour—she felt discouraged almost to a hopeless degree. Did she long for her childhood home, and those child days, care-free and happy? She must have been a child at one time; yet, one could scarcely realize that the quaint little body had ever been other than as she was that evening. It was with great difficulty that her weary limbs bore her into the house. Old Marm Milly soon had her a cup of hot tea, some steaming toast, and an egg. Then she bathed her tired little feet in hot water; and when they had kneeled down and said their prayers, she tucked her little Missus into her nice, soft bed and sat by her, crooning a lullaby as she would have done to a child left of its mother. When the little soul was well asleep, the faithful old servant turned out the light and slipped from the room upon her tiptoes, softly closing the door after her. Having made everything secure for the night, she went to her own room.

“It’s er shame, how people does ’pose on my little Missus,” soliloquized the old woman, as she prepared herself for sleep—a thing that comes to her race as the dew from Heaven. “No one need come eround yere dis night an’ ’spect ’er ter go nursin’

deir sick brats. I jes' ain't gwine ter hear 'em, ef dey does. Jes' let one uv deir little mischiefs git er splinter in he toe, an' it's, 'Run fur Little Miss Tip-pers'—meks no differ'nce how tired she is—de dear li'l' soul! It meks me bilin' mad—it do."

The clock in the dining-room had just struck three, when there came a gentle tapping at the door, which aroused Marm Milly, who said in an undertone, "I's not gwine ter hyear yer," and she drew the bed clothing up over her head. Again there came tap-tap-tap, and the door opened. Marm Milly sprang from her bed and hurried into her Missus' dressing-room. Peeping through the intervening portieres, she saw the room flooded with a strange, soft light—and the light was an exquisitely delicate perfume. A vision appeared upon the threshold—tall, graceful, and of surpassing loveliness. "Oh, my Lawd," cried Marm Milly, as she threw her hands over her head. "Dat's Miss Fanny's speerit!" and she turned and fled to her own room, again covering her head with the bed clothing and shivering from overwhelming fright. "Hit's Miss Fanny's speerit!" she kept whispering to herself. When her conscience chided her for her desertion of her little Missus, she whispered, "Miss Fanny won't hu't my li'l' Missus—Miss Fanny won't hu't 'er—Miss Fanny won't hu't 'er. Thus she whispered, moaned, and shivered throughout the night.

The vision which Marm Milly had seen entering her Missus's room was quickly followed by another—closing the door. When a slight noise caused the sleeper to stir, the first visitor pressed a finger to her

lips, while she raised the other hand in caution. They stood quite still until the breathing assured them that the little woman slept again. Then they began moving about the room, evincing the keenest interest in everything they saw. To the second one, everything seemed strange and novel. She critically examined all the room's furnishings. Each dainty little thing, though never so trivial, was looked at, and toyed with, and wondered over—nothing escaped her scrutiny. The pictures on the wall seemed to puzzle her most. Again and again, she went around the room examining them. Finally she came to a well-worn copy of the Bible. She called the attention of the other one to it, who explained it to her, and she became greatly interested in it—doubtless, she had heard something of it. Together they began turning its leaves, stopping where a book-mark rested, or where there were signs of thumb-wear. So deeply interested did they become, that they fain would have continued its perusal; but the crowing of a cock startled them. Hastily replacing the volume on the little stand near the head of the bed, they began moving rapidly, though noiselessly, about the room. The first one produced a curiously wrought fan, and began waving it over the face of the sleeper, whose breathing grew slower and slower. The other one then advanced and began passing her hands gently over the little woman's face. Each touch left its impress—wrought some change—smoothing out every mark of toil or care. The wrinkles between her brows faded away; the crows-feet, that had been forming about the corners

of her eyes, disappeared under the skilled, tender touch. The cheeks were moulded out round and plump, as when her mother had kissed them long years ago. The callous places on the worn, weary hands were softened and smoothed away; every trace of toil was gone; and the hands lay on the coverlet white, plump, and smooth—but cold. So, also, with the tired little feet.

These things accomplished, they stood and admired her beauty as she lay there before them. They leaned over and lovingly kissed her.

Again, the curious fan was waved over the sleeper's face; her breathing grew still slower, and slower, and shorter. They stood waiting, with radiant faces, watching the sinking breath. It has stopped—she breathes no more. Not a pain pinched the quickest nerve—not a muscle quivered. Still they stand in breathless anticipation—no other breath comes—only at last—a sigh. That sigh was the tired little spirit which the Angels from Heaven caught up and bore away.

The light and the perfume went out. The door was closed again. There was the ruffling of glad wings, rending the sky—taking Little Miss Tippers home.

CHAPTER LII

Anything approaching a detailed account of the many perils and hardships through which Doctor De Mar passed would exhaust the patience of the most stolid reader. Very recently he had gone through the battle of the Wilderness—within itself enough to make a man a veteran—one of the steps leading up to the siege of Petersburg, the key to the Confederacy.

On Wednesday, July 27, 1864, Doctor De Mar and Captain Evans were in Petersburg. It was known that the Union forces were tunneling with the view of placing a mine under the Confederate works near Petersburg; and these two scouts were sent into the Union lines to pick up any intelligence that was to be had.

Providing themselves with a small skiff and three days' rations, they embarked on the Appomattox, from near where the railroad bridge spanned that river. They quietly dropped down stream until they reached a point opposite Fort McGilvery, where they abandoned their skiff and struck across the country toward Harrison Creek, which they reached just before daylight Thursday morning. There they concealed themselves during the day. That night was spent in making incursions directly into the Union camps, beating toward their left wing. It was on that night that they fell in with some negro troops, and learned that they were being drilled as to the part they should take in the charge when the mine should be sprung. However, they were unable

to get any exact information as to when that would be done. On Friday night they reached the head of the creek near the Norfolk road, along which they skulked; and succeeded in passing through the Federal works shortly after midnight, not far from Fort Morton. Then they followed the Norfolk road to where it intersected the Jerusalem Plank road, at the Griffith house. Being exhausted, they turned aside and threw themselves upon the ground and were soon asleep.

About four o'clock the exploding of a shell near by awakened them. Springing to their feet, they stood confused, being so suddenly aroused from a profound sleep. Scarcely had they gathered their scattered wits, when there was a distinct tremor of the earth. In the next instant there was unfolded to their view a scene that beggared description. It was as though a cloud had sprung up from out of the ground; with a most unearthly roar, its first movement was quick and impulsive. Then rising slowly and more slowly, it spread out as it went—up and up—hundreds and hundreds of feet into the air, the dull, gray mass pervaded by an indefinable, weird glow. All this, in that fresh, uncertain dawn-light, looked as if hell was bursting forth upon earth, freighted with human forms—whole and dismembered—commingling with all kinds of debris. In the first instant the mind could not grasp its significance. The bravest of the brave were awe-stricken and stood aghast—dumfounded. For quite awhile both sides were appalled; and it was scarcely strange that those who struck the blow were quite as demoralized as those who received it. There was

as little exultation on one side as there was despair on the other. How infinitely more shocking if it had been possible to realize to the full the extent of the disaster—hundreds of human beings hurled into eternity without an instant's warning; other hundreds mangled, bleeding, buried beneath the sands, the timbers, the guns, and the dead within "the Crater"; to say nothing of the far-reaching effects running down through all the coming years, upon the mothers, wives, sisters and children, heartbroken and mourning for loved ones who never more returned. Ah, but that was war! And yet—all this horror, appalling beyond description, was but the prelude to what was to follow fast and furious. The hearts that had stood still a few moments ago beat now with unwonted force, sending the blood in great gushes into the faces that had just been blanched as if with death. It would have been unreasonable to expect men under such circumstances to act coolly and calmly and for the best. The participants in this tragedy were but men.

Soon shot and shell shrieked and screamed everywhere—sweeping the face of the earth. "The Crater" was soon swarming with Union soldiers—a disorganized mob.

Our two scouts, as they stood there, seeing flag after flag hoisted within "the crater," until a score or more of them waved their defiance in the face of the Confederate army, fully realized the gravity of the situation, and what it meant to the cause they loved. And when at last they saw the handful of tattered, war-stained troops with General Mahone hastening down the road toward the ravine, they

could but feel their hearts sink when they thought how few they were for the work in hand. They followed the fast-moving column. Having reached the point from which the charge was to be made, they watched the troops deploy in line of battle. They heard the order, "Fix bayonets!" Not a man in that little band but realized what that meant and what was expected of him, and the danger there was in the doing. Our scouts, who had so recently seen the great number of troops that had been massed on the other side for this particular emergency, and who now saw these—not nearly one thousand—to meet that horde and drive them back, felt how hopeless it all must be. But when the order "Forward!" came, every man sprang to his feet—not a single one faltering an instant—and with a yell rushing to the fray. No more inspiring scene ever blessed a soldier's eyes. No trained regulars of any country or time ever made a more gallant charge, nor one more fraught with danger. It was Balaklava on foot. Although made with a rush, it was done with almost the precision of a dress parade. Our scouts caught the inspiration and rushed after them, all heedless of the leaden storm. They had no guns; but they had not far to go before they were able to provide themselves; for many of that gallant little band never lived to cross that space, swept by a river of fire. Having reached the works, they fired their only shots, and would have to depend upon their bayonets and side-arms. They sprang into a deep, narrow ditch which led in the direction of the main works. Along this they were hurrying, Doctor Jack in front, when they came to an angle in the

ditch where he ran right into a Union officer. They immediately clinched, and so suddenly that neither had time nor opportunity to use his weapons. Both were powerful men, and each did his best to disarm the other. The struggle was furious. Captain Evans ran to his friend's relief and was in the act of plunging his bayonet into the officer, when Doctor De Mar cried, "Don't kill him! I can handle him," whereupon Captain Evans desisted. Just then a number of negro troops came swarming down the ditch toward them, and the tables were turned; realizing which, our scouts made a dash back for the angle in the ditch. Whereupon, the negro in front raised his gun to fire at the fleeing Confederates; but the officer seized his gun, crying, "Don't kill that man; he has just saved my life!" The negro lowered his gun without firing. Not so, however, the one next following. He either did not hear or heed what the officer had said, for he raised his gun and fired pointblank at Doctor De Mar, who was not five paces from him. Captain Evans was now in front. But as they ran, Doctor Jack's canteen strap caught on a root which was projecting from the side of the ditch. He jerked at it to disengage himself, but it did not yield. Quick as thought, he lowered his head to throw the strap off. It was just at this juncture that the negro fired his shot. The ball pierced the Doctor's hat and passed on, penetrating Captain Evans's brain, killing him instantly. The Doctor reached the angle, and was safe for the time being; for he here met a number of Mahone's men advancing, who swept the ditch with gunbutt and bayonet. So piled was the ditch

at this point with the dead, that the Doctor had no little trouble that night in finding the body of his friend.

A description of this battle is not within the purview of this story; and it is well, for no pen can describe the hand-to-hand conflict that ensued. The carnage—the relentless thrust—the appealing cry—the unheeded prayer for mercy—the overwhelming terror—the awe-stricken faces—the curses—the fiendish laugh—the struggle of it all—the sweat and the blood! No imagination could encompass a tithe of it.

CHAPTER LIII

At Appomattox, Doctor De Mar laid down his arms with the same spirit of loyalty with which he had taken them up—loyalty to “the powers that be.” His State had declared its right of secession; and he did what he could to make that claim good, loyalty and willingly—if need be, to give his life for it. The fortunes of war decided against States’ rights—that no State held a right which the General Government was bound to respect. From that decision there was no appeal; and he at once became a loyal citizen of the United States.

After the surrender he was loath to return to his blighted home. When the news came to him that it had been burned, he appeared perfectly indifferent. What was it to him? Already it had been despoiled of every charm it had ever held for him. It was possible that at heart he was rather pleased than pained. Now that he must go somewhere, without knowing or caring where, he beat about the country on horseback, alone, except his faithful body-servant, Rufus, who had begged his master to retain him in his service.

About the first of July he found himself within a few miles of Sandowns. It is doubtful if he would have gone there now, near as he was to it, had it not been for his attachment for his old ex-slaves. When he recalled their faithfulness, their loyalty to him and his family, his heart warmed to them, and he asked himself, “What will become of them?” He made up his mind to go home and make provision

for those who wished to stay on the old place, giving them some land and stock, and then take himself out of the country until things were more settled.

His mind was in this condition when he found himself one evening at the gate of Mr. Nearson, one of his close neighbors, who had arrived home from the army some weeks before. This man had often received assistance from the De Mars, whereby he had been enabled to get his start in the world; and being endowed with that rare attribute gratitude, his heart and home were immediately thrown open to receive his friend and neighbor, who was cordially invited to spend the night, and as much longer as would suit his convenience.

The Doctor's quiet mood was respected. His friends, of course, knew of the great sorrow that had come to him, and which had wrought so great a change in their old time, jovial, happy friend. After a substantial supper, the Doctor strolled out into the front yard. Back and forth he walked. Then he passed out into the road that led to Sandowns, standing there for quite a while in profound meditation. Then, as if drawn on by some strange power beyond his will to resist, he started in the direction of his home. Again and again he paused and turned as if to retrace his steps; but each time something drew him on. When he came to the sharp turn in the road which brought him in full view of the place, he stopped and covered his face with his hands to shut out the sight of it. Thus he stood; the dread of seeing the old place—the old home—detering him. The full moon had reached the zenith, her pale witching light flooding everything, save the dark,

deep shadows on the sand. Suddenly he overcame his hesitancy, and walked steadily forward, until he came to the entrance to the place.

The fence had all broken down, and only the great granite gate posts were in place. The driveway had grown up with rank weeds—not a footpath through them. Before him stood the four tall white chimneys; and there stood the great dead oaks, all wrecked and ruined. All was changed to him as he mused there, leaning against one of the posts. Turning, he saw the beautiful broad Oconee River lying off there to the west, its waters smooth and placid as when his child eyes first beheld them; smooth and placid as when the Indians, a hundred years ago, plied their canoes there in quest of game or the white man's scalp—it at least had not changed. Some time passed before he began to realize the devastation and vandalism of it all. It was only after letting his mind run back and back over the past, freighted with its sacred memories, that its ruin grew upon him and eventually overwhelmed him with its magnitude.

While he lingered there he heard the boat come up the river and stop at the landing—there was no regular schedule yet. Later he saw the boat pass up the river, with its colored lights glinting over the waters, and heard the puffing steam and the churning wheels. He watched it until it passed out of view; and he turned once again to the sight of his dear old home. How quiet and still everything was! The graves of his ancestors were not more so. Yes, it was the stillness of death; and the stillness oppressed him, until he felt that he should suffocate.

It was a momentary relief to him when a bird flitted over his head and perched upon one of the tall white chimneys and took up its cry, "Whippoorwill, Whippoorwill, Whippoorwill!" There was at least one living thing. As time went by a realization of what all this loss meant swept over him—a loss not only of material wealth, but a horrid, blood-curdling assassination of all the fond associations of a lifetime, of all the tender sentiments that clung about and made it, to him, holy ground. And although there was the unutterable pain, in connection with the disappearance of his wife,—whom he had loved so fondly—ay, and loved so dearly still, with every evidence against her,—his heart held true as steel to her. "She could do no wrong. She may be dead—I may never see her again, but—doubt her—never! There is some strange mistake—some mystery unexplained about it all; but wilful wrong-doing, no!" While he had this confidence in his wife, he could but feel crushed and intensely humiliated by the cloud it threw over him. There had never been the slightest stain on the name De Mar before. No people were more devoid of pride of wealth or person—in both of which respects few had better excuse; yet, there were none who had a higher standard of pride of character. The more he thought of this shame, the more maddening it became—almost unbalancing his mind.

"I see," he cried in his agony, "in all the years to come the De Mars hanging their heads in shame, when they remember and think of the stigma I brought on their name. I see the old place—the home of my father and his fore-fathers—neglected

and shunned as a plague-cursed spot upon the face of the earth. They may instruct their children to keep away from it—never to see it—to let it be as though it never had been—or, they may lead them here, and show them this as an object-lesson of the woe that may be wrought by disregarding the traditions of the family—traditions of a hundred years' standing. They will picture it to them in all its pride and prime, and then tell them all this black story of shame, long years after I have rotted in my grave. O that I had found rest with the thousands of comrades who sleep on Virginia soil—clad in the gray! I should have gone in Hal's place—down by the river."

As he stood there that night, with this weight crushing down upon his sorely tried heart, amidst all these weird surroundings, he felt as though he should go mad. His nervous system was shattered—he was not himself; and when he saw a tall white figure approaching him out of the dark, dense foliage of the undergrowth, it was not hard to believe that he thought it was a supernatural apparition—he knew not himself what he thought, if he thought at all. However, true it was, he turned and fled. His flight was arrested by a shot ringing out on the still night air, sharp and clear; this followed by a terrifying scream. "Hold! There is something real in these"—there could be no mistake there. In an instant he regained control of himself, and hastened back from whence he came. He saw a white figure lying in the middle of the road, and a dark one standing nearby. The latter rushed toward him, crying,

"Marse Jack—my Marse Jack—O my Marse Jack!" in a voice the Doctor knew so well.

"You here, Uncle Lot?" and they grasped each other's hand. "What is that?" pointing to the prostrate form.

"It's my Missus—come back safe—t'ank de Lawd!" said Lot.

In an instant the Doctor was down beside her, kissing her cold lips, eyes, and cheeks, calling her the most endearing names, begging her to speak to him, if only one word; but no response came to greet his anxious, longing ears.

"Great Heavens, Lot! I fear she is dead. Was she shot?"

"No, Marse Jack, she ain't shot," said Lot.

"I can detect no pulse. I do not believe that she is breathing either. She is dead! Oh, my poor, dear wife!"

"I doesn't spec' she's daid, Marse Jack. She's jes' 'zausted. She ain't eat ernough ter keep er bird 'live in de las' two weeks. She's been er frettin' an' er worryin', feared dat you'd git yere an' go erway 'fore she'd git yere. Ain't dere no house yere, w'ere we could tek her? What's bercome uv all de houses?"

"Everything seems to have been burned, Lot."

"My Lawd! W'at anybody bu'n de houses fur?"

"There is no time to think of that now. Run up to Mr. Nearson's as fast as you can, and ask him to send some conveyance to remove my wife. Be quick!"

Lot required no urging, he made all the time he could. The Doctor began chafing his wife's hands,

trying to get up some circulation. At last she sighed, and soon began to breathe perceptibly, the feeble pulse returning at the wrist. The Doctor poured out his heart in grateful thanks—she lived! He grew so impatient over the delay, he picked her up in his arms and started off to meet the conveyance. How light she had grown! He called to her as he went, begging her to speak one word to him—just one word! Again and again he kissed her wan cheek as he held her tight in his arms—lest he might lose her again. He had not gone far when he met Mr. Nearson and Lot coming with a spring wagon, in which they had placed a mattress. The Doctor gently laid her in the wagon, and climbing in took her head on his lap. Every few moments he listened to hear if she was breathing—more than once he had the wagon stopped for that purpose.

Having arrived at the house, she was carried into the sitting-room, on the ground floor, which had been made ready for her reception. Everything, every care, every attention that loving hearts or tender hands could do or devise, was done to make her comfortable. But she did not regain consciousness. The next day fever of a slow, continued form set in. Lot was dispatched to hunt up any remaining members of the family in the neighborhood, and was given a list of such remedies as might be needed in the case, that any of them might chance to have. Dick De Mar soon made his appearance, and the meeting of the cousins was touching indeed. Dick informed the Doctor that all the residences of the family had been burned except "The Willows"; all

of the ladies were there; and that a room was made ready for Lil.

"That is very kind," said the Doctor, "but I dare not attempt to move her now."

It was six weeks before any one could tell whether she would live or die.

Miss Dell De Mar and her cousin, Miss Pattie, came, and by reliefs assisted the Doctor in nursing his wife. He never left her bedside for more than a few moments at a time—watching, waiting, tending, praying! Old Uncle Lot sat on the door steps, sleeping or waking, throughout those weary weeks—nothing short of a peremptory command from his master could have sent him from his post. Many, many times during that period the old darky, when he thought no one was observing him, would slip off the steps, and, kneeling in the sand, pray most fervently that his Missus might be spared to get well and be able to tell their story herself.

At the end of the sixth week—it was on a Sunday, when the family of the house had gone to church—the Doctor was sitting alone with his wife, and Uncle Lot was at his post. The patient's hand—oh, so thin and wan!—was resting on the side of the bed near the Doctor; ever and anon he caressed it. Sitting there fondling her hand, he noticed that the fever was subsiding.

"Uncle Lot, Missus's fever is going off."

"T'ank de Lawd, I's so glad—I's so glad!"

Tears, the overflow from grateful hearts, welled from their eyes in great, fast-falling drops. The Doctor leaned over, and kissed and patted the dear little hands, repeatedly calling her name,

"Lilian—Lilian, dear Lilian—my own little wife," in tones as soft and low as only a man with a heart as gentle and true as his could do. While her lips moved not, her fingers tightened around his, and his heart beat lighter than it had done for many a long day. He kissed and patted the thin little hand, but no other pressure came to comfort him. By night her fever had entirely gone, and she grew extremely weak and her extremities cold. Throughout the night the Doctor, Dell, and Pattie kept watch, administering stimulants and keeping up artificial heat. By morning she was perfectly quiet—breathing naturally, the pulse improved and the extremities keeping warm. She slept for hours. When she awakened, she opened her eyes for the first time; and the first thing to bless them was the sight of her husband's face beaming with pleasure and fondest love. She smiled and closed her lids, and little puddles of tears—warm, thankful tears—formed in the hollows of her eyes. Safe! With her husband close by her side—and he loved her still! She was happy!

On several occasions Lot essayed to give his master an account of his stewardship—he was so anxious to vindicate his Missus, while she lay there, poor thing, so weak and helpless, trembling between life and death. In case she should not recover, old Uncle Lot wanted his master to know before she died; but each time his master had said to him,

"Not now, Lot—wait."

"Certainly, Marse Jack; but it's all right."

It was late that same evening before she spoke; then her first words were,

"Has Lot told you?"

"Not yet, dearie—only that it was all right." Then the tears streamed from her eyes faster than he could possibly kiss them away, until she began to sob.

"There, there, there, dearie; you must not give way now. There!" and he soothed her as he would have soothed a sobbing child. He gave her stimulants and anodynes, and she slept for hours. She was much better the next morning, and her first words were,

"Has Lot told you?"

"No, dear, not yet. That is all right; you can tell me when you get strong."

"I may never get strong again. Where is Lot?"

"Right here at the door where he has been all the time."

"Good, faithful old man! Tell him to come here."

When he came, she held out her hand to him.

"Uncle Lot, tell your Marse Jack everything."

"I will, Missus, jes' as soon as yer gits strong, so he kin leave yer."

"Tell him to-day, I cannot wait," and as she looked at him, a tender, far away, wistful something came into her eyes—they seemed to be looking from another world.

"Well, Uncle Lot, your Missus wants you to tell me now. Come out on the lawn." When they were out of earshot, he said, "You must make it short, Uncle Lot; I must not be away from her longer than may be necessary."

"Yer see, Marse Jack, w'en Missus went away,

hit did look kinder 'spicious fer er fact; an' dere wuzn't nothin' fur me ter do but ter go an' see arfter 'er. W'en I tole Winny good-by, an' w'en I tole de ole place whar I wuz born good-by, I says, 'Ef I never fines my Missus, Lot will never come back hisse'f—an' I never would er. I followed 'em ter Furginny, an' w'ile I wuz er lookin' fur you—an' yer had gone home—I lose 'em, an' got tuck up er pris'ner, dough I'd done nuthin' ter be tuck up erbout. Dey kep' me fur fo' months, an', Marse Jack, dem wuz de longest fo' months I ever seed in my life. I wouldn't er minded it so much ef I'd known dat Missus wuz safe. I t'ought my ole heart would break, er wear itself out, er worryin' day an' night—day an' night. Ef dey had give me ernough ter eat, I couldn't er eat it; it would all swell up in my th'roat till it almost choked me. I t'ought erbout all de caged t'ings I had ever seen er hyeard of—birds er beatin' deir ti'ed wings ergin deir cages, an' er prayin' in deir bird talk ter git out. I said I'd never ergin fassen up anyt'ing so it couldn't git loose ef it want ter.

“By an' by dey tu'ned me er loose; an' dey gin me back part uv my money, which was more'n I 'spected, shore. Now yer see, Marse Jack, w'ile we wuz er beatin' er long de country ter Furginny, I hyeard 'em er talkin' erbout what dey wuz gwine ter do w'en dey gits ter Hazelhurst. Yer oughter seen me wrastlin' wid dat name w'ile I wuz er pris'ner, fur fear dat I mought furgit it w'en I got out. So w'en I did git out, I arsked everybody I saw ef dey knowed whur wuz Hazelhurst, an' none uv 'em knowed er t'ing erbout it; an' I wuz er gittin'

moughty 'scouraged, w'en I happen' ter meet er mighty nice-lookin' old gintleman—he 'minded me uv ole Massa, fur de worl'. I arsked 'im as perlite es I could, ef he knowed whur wuz Hazelhurst. He say,

“ ‘Ole man, ain't yer frum de Souf?’

“ ‘Yes, boss, I's frum Ca'lina,' says I.

“ ‘I t'ought so,' says he; ‘I wuz born down Souf myse'f, an' I know er genuine down-Souf nigger soon's I see 'im.’

“ ‘Bless de Lawd!' says I, ‘I's moughty glad ter see yer, boss'; an' he hel' out his han' jes' as nat'ral as any gintleman—jes' like old Massa fur de worl'. I felt almos' safe one more time. Den he say ter me,

“ ‘Where wuz dat place yer wuz er lookin' fur?’

“ ‘Hazelhurst,' says I. Den he say he disremember hisse'f; but ef I'd go erround to de post-orfice wid 'im, he'd fine out fur me. So we went ter de post-orfice, an' he arsked de man in de li'l' winder whur ter fine Hazelhurst.

“ ‘What State?' arsked de man in de li'l' winder. He arsked it so quick an' snappy, I had ter think in er hurry—dem Yankee folks allers in sich a big hurry; dey wants ter know t'ings smack off de reel. I felt lak tellin' 'im dat we gintlemen down Souf ain't made outen buzz-saws, but I knowed dat wouldn' do; so arfter t'inkin' er while I says, ‘I 'spects it in New Yawk.' Den he look in er book an' say, ‘Yes, it's in New Yawk.' So de nice ole gintlemen writ it down on some paper fur me, how I wuz ter go. He arsked me ef I had any money, an' he pulled out his pocket-book an' 'gun ter fumble

in it. I t'anks 'im an' tells 'im I am got some money myse'f. Den he shake han's wid me an' tole me good-by, an' wish me good luck.

"De next night arfter dat firs' night, I got ter Hazelhurst. Early nex' mawnin' I went out ter see whur I wuz. I didn' like ter ask too p'intedly erbout Missus, fur fear maybe she hain't got dere. So I strolled erround, an' kept my eyes open. Finally, I see Missus er sittin' on er v'randa; an' bless my life! dere sot dat 'dential young man right berside 'er an' er holdin' 'er han'. When I fust see Missus, my ole heart leaped like er lamb, but w'en I see dat young man wid her I wuz all broke up ter pieces an' sot back; an' I stopped right dere. Jes' den Missus say,

"'Ain't dat Lot?' Yer see, Marse Jack, I wuzn't 'guised den, so she knowed me; an' de next minit she jes' cum er runnin', an' wuz pow'ful glad ter see me fer shore. She cried, an' cried, an' cried. I wondered ef she wuz so sorry dat she had run off wid dat young man, an' left you.

"She jes' hel' out her han' an' led me right up ter dat young man, an' said,

"'Bennie, dis is ole Uncle Lot what yer hyeard me tell so much erbout, sometimes.'

"'Den I mus' shake han's wid 'im,' said he. I kinder held back, I didn' want ter shake han's wid 'im. Missus see dat, an' she say,

"'Dis is my brother, Uncle Lot—my only brother, an' yer must shake han's wid 'im.'

"'Fore de Lawd, Missus, *is dat yer brother?*' says I.

"'Yes, Uncle Lot, dis is my brother,' an' she say

it good an' strong, right out; an' den I knows it wuz de Lawd's truff, an' I shuck han's wid 'im on de spot."

"Wait a moment, Uncle Lot!" said Doctor Jack, and he hurried into the little sitting-room at the Nearson's. What transpired there, nothing but their own hearts could tell. After a long time, he returned and bade the old darky proceed with his story.

"Well, Missus say she never wuz so 'sprised in 'er life ter see nobody; an' wanted ter know wa't brought me erway off dere? Now, Marse Jack, I didn' want 'er ter know w'at er great big fool I wuz, so I says, 'I cain't tell yer, Missus, right now; I'll tell yer by an' by.' I jes' wondered how her brother got way down in Car'lina, w'en de armies wuz er fightin' like dey wuz. An' ef he wuz 'er brother, w'at fur wuz she 'shamed uv 'im—he wuz er mighty nice-lookin' young man. Missus saw me er lookin' at 'im, so she say ter 'im, ter excuse us as she t'ought maybe I mout wanter ter talk ter 'er alone. So he got up an' went inter de house.

"I knowed dat Missus wuzn't easy in 'er mine, so I jes' up an' tole 'er de whole truff, frum beginnin' ter de end. Yer know w'at she say, Marse Jack? She say, 'Bless yer dear, ole, faithful heart,'—dat's w'at she said, an' it sounded jes' like ole Missus er talkin' ter me. Den she tole me dat her brother wuz in de Northern army, an' got cotch er pris'ner at some such place as Auntie Tam, an' tuck down in Georgy an' shet up jes' like I wuz. Dat made me monst'ous sorry fur 'im, 'cause I knowed how it wuz myse'f. But he got erway an' come up inter

Car'lina. He natur'ly didn' want ter go back; an' he kep' out uv folks' sight, fur fear dey would sen' 'im back ter prison. Missus say she couldn't er help deir takin' 'im—it wuz er awful place he said, an' I b'lieved 'im. So Missus didn' know w'at ter do 'ceptin' ter try an' git 'im outen de country as soon as she could, unbeknowinst ter anybody. An' I tells yer, Marse Jack, Missus did hev er turrible time uv it fur shore. It would tek er whole month ter tell yer erbout it.

“Missus asked me all kinds uv queschuns erbout you; she seemed ter feel like I had seen yer since she had. Den she would make me tell her all erbout yer, when yer wuz er li'l boy—anyt'ing, jes' so it wuz erbout yer. Pore Missus! I wuz so sorry fur 'er den—an' ter t'ink what er fool I'd been. An' how we'd 'spected her. I sees, Marse Jack, dat yer gittin' res'less, so I'll make it short.

“When we hyeard dat ole Marse Lee said dat we had fit ernough, Missus got moughty res'less-like, an' kep' er wantin' ter come home; but dey kep' tellin' 'er dat all de railroads wuz tore up an' de bridges all down, an' it wuzn't safe nohow. One mornin' Missus say to me, ‘Lot, we's gwine ter start home. We will git dere somehow er other. I jes' feels dat ef we don't go now, yer Marse Jack won't be dere.’ Missus sent out an' bought er pistil an' gin it ter me; she said we mought need it. So we started. We did hev er drefful time uv it, shore! Missus kep' er frettin' all de time 'cause we wuz so slow. When fina'l'y an' at las' we got off de boat down at de landin', she wouldn't wait fur me ter git er ca'iage. I tole 'er I'd soon run up ter de

house an' hev Cæsar bring de ca'iage. I never dreamed dat everyt'ing had been squatulated; but Missus wouldn' hear ter it; an' we walked up ter de house as fas' as we could. Missus say, 'Ef we don' hurry, Lot, Marse Jack'll be gone, an' we never see 'im ergin.' Pore Missus! Pore Missus!

"W'en we got ter whur de house used tẽr wuz, an' I sees yer runnin' erway widout speakin' ter Missus,—she did look jes' like er ghos', shore; she wuz so white,—I knowed dat yer didn' beliebe in ghos's fer common; but w'en I sees yer goin' erway, I says ter myse'f, 'Marse Jack ain't erfraid uv er gun, an' he'll know dat no ghos' kin shoot,' so I pulled out de pistil an' shot it up in de air ter 'tract yer 'tention. Yer knows de res', Marse Jack. Pore Missus er lyin' dere in de san'! An' pore Missus er lyin' up yonder in de house now so ti'ed an' so weak, an' so he'pless—pore Missus!"

There was a long silence; neither was disposed to speak or move. Lot could contain himself no longer. With trembling hand and choking voice, he took his master's hand in his, and said as best he could,

"Marse Jack—what's me an' you—gwine ter do —ter mek it up ter pore Missus—fur thinkin' anyt'ing wrong—erbout 'er? Say, Marse Jack?"

It was some moments before his master could command his voice; when he did, he raised his hand toward Heaven, and said,

"With God's help, I will nurse her back to health and strength. And with His blessing—I will spend the remainder of my days—trying to repay her—my own dear, little wife;—and—you—my good, true friend."

And it was even so—as he said.

